

THE  
CHILD AMY



By  
JULIA · MAGRYDER ·



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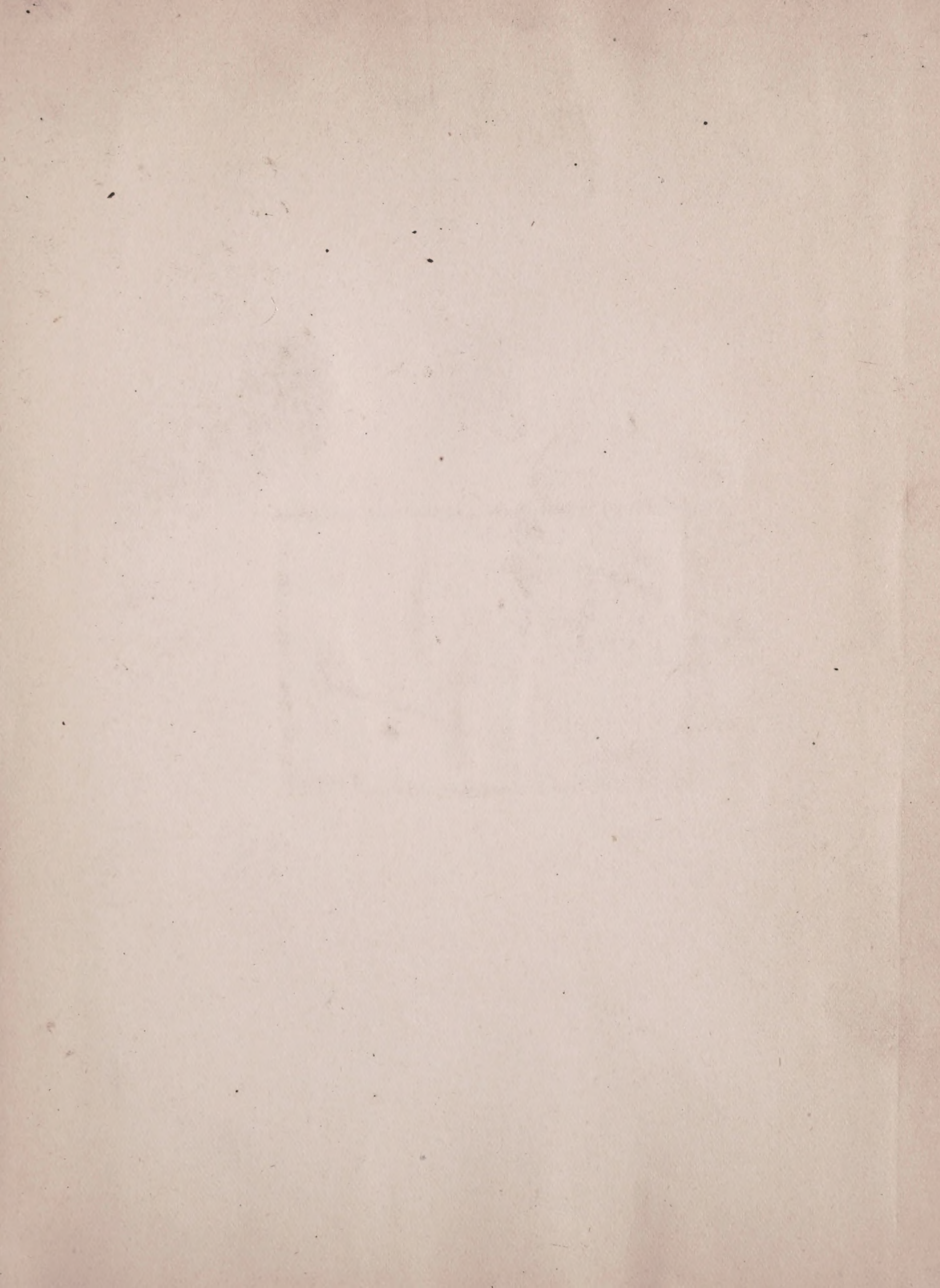
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LITTLE MISS AMY DESCENDED THE GREAT STAIRCASE.

(See page 139.)



The  
Child Army

written



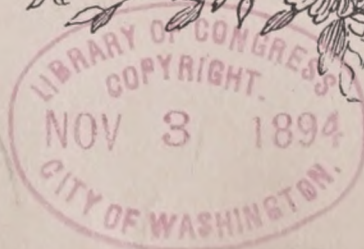
by

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## CONTENTS.

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|                       | PAGE. |
|-----------------------|-------|
| CHAPTER I. . . . .    | I     |
| CHAPTER II. . . . .   | 19    |
| CHAPTER III. . . . .  | 38    |
| CHAPTER IV. . . . .   | 59    |
| CHAPTER V. . . . .    | 80    |
| CHAPTER VI. . . . .   | 100   |
| CHAPTER VII. . . . .  | 121   |
| CHAPTER VIII. . . . . | 135   |
| CHAPTER IX. . . . .   | 150   |
| CHAPTER X. . . . .    | 164   |
| CHAPTER XI. . . . .   | 181   |
| CHAPTER XII. . . . .  | 196   |
| CHAPTER XIII. . . . . | 209   |
| CHAPTER XIV. . . . .  | 218   |
| CHAPTER XV. . . . .   | 246   |
| CHAPTER XVI. . . . .  | 259   |
| CHAPTER XVII. . . . . | 272   |







## LIST OF ILLUSTRATIONS.

---

|   |                    |
|---|--------------------|
| <i>Little Miss Amy descended the Great Staircase</i> . . . . .                              | <i>Frontis.</i>    |
| <i>Harry entered, leading a Little Girl by the hand</i> . . . . .                           | 39                 |
| <i>She began to smell Rose after Rose</i> . . . . .   | 61                 |
| <i>" You are a Bad Old Man ! "</i> . . . . .  | <i>opposite</i> 84 |
| <i>The Child scowlingly watched Miss Melissa to see what she would say</i> . . . . .        | 95                 |
| <i>When She and Miss Melissa had counted every cent, there was far too little</i> . . . . . | 235                |
| <i>She found out that they both liked Buttermilk</i> . . . . .                              | 291                |









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## I.

MISS MELISSA sat with her knitting in her hands. The needles clicked monotonously, in the quiet room. There was nothing for Miss Melissa to do but to sit alone and knit and think. The house in which she lived with her old bachelor brother had, years ago, been reduced to such a state of order and system that every servant had his or her exactly appointed task, and Miss Melissa's superintendence of things occupied but a few hours every day. She liked to knit, though sometimes she got tired of the monotony of it. She only sighed, however, and said nothing. It had one great recommendation; she could knit



and think at the same time, and she had a great deal to think about.

She sat in her rocking-chair in the large, well-kept, comfortable sitting-room of the old country-house. The bright light of the summer day was partially shut out by the bowed window blinds that offered, however, no obstacle to the songs of the birds outside. It was plain from the expression of her kind old face that she was thinking of something that troubled her. Two or three times as she began a new row on her stocking, fitting the polished needle into the old-fashioned knitting-sheath pinned at her side, she breathed a brief, half-stifled sigh.

When the door opened presently, and an old servant-woman put her head in, Miss Melissa looked up, and said rather anxiously:

“What is it, Martha?”

It was unusual for Martha to come to her at this hour, and she had seen, moreover, on the servant's face a look of half-frightened excitement.

“Somebody wants to see you,” she said.

“Somebody? Who?”



The old woman came nearer, and after looking around the room timidly, said, with an air of mystery :

“It’s” — she did not utter the name, but conveyed it to the consciousness of her mistress by a significant nod of the head.

“No, no; it can’t be! He wouldn’t dare! He wouldn’t be so foolish! Oh! if Thomas were here what would become of us? Where is he, Martha? You don’t mean that the boy has actually come to this house?”

“He’s down at the barn; but he says he’s not going away without seeing you. He says if you won’t come there to see him, he’ll come up to the house and see you.”

“O, poor boy! he must be in some awful trouble to say that. I suppose he has repented at last; but it’s too late. His uncle has said he never would forgive him, and I’m afraid he never will.” She had got up from her seat and put down her knitting in a disordered state, most unnatural to her. “Don’t let him come to the house,” she said. “Go tell him I’m coming.”



“Never mind, Martha,” said a boy’s voice behind her; “I don’t like skulking about at the barn. I’m not afraid. I have a right to speak to my aunt, and I will speak to her—unless she refuses.”

He stepped just within the room, and stood still. There was not much indication of a penitent, come to sue for pardon, in this boy’s face. He had taken off his soft cap, and held it crushed under his right hand, as he stood with his arms akimbo and his hands on his hips, and looked at his aunt with defiance, struggling with some gentler feeling in his glance.

“O, Harry!” the old woman exclaimed, going toward him, “what made you come here? Your uncle would be so angry.”

“I didn’t come to see my uncle,” the boy said, shaking backward his curly head. He had accepted his aunt’s kiss, but it was evident that her words had embittered it. “I’ve got nothing to ask of my uncle, and he don’t want to keep me out of his sight any more than I want to keep him out of mine. If he thinks I am going to



cringe to him and ask his forgiveness, for the sake of getting his miserable, dirty money, which he's made by grinding other people, he's mistaken."

"O, Harry, Harry, hush! It's wicked to talk about your uncle so. Suppose he should hear you!"

"I wish he could. I wish I could make him listen to what I think of him. Perhaps it is wicked; I've been told I was wicked, and bad, and ungrateful often enough to make me believe it, I'm sure. I used to be sorry and wish I could be better, but now I don't care. I never care, except when I think of you. That was what made me run away; I wanted to rid your eyes forever of the disgrace of having such a nephew. I never expected to come back. I hoped you would think I was dead. I was dead, as far as you were concerned; and you never would have seen me again, but for what has happened now."

"Oh! I can't be anything but glad that you've come," said Miss Melissa, wiping her eyes. "I've cried, and prayed, and longed for you every day



that's passed. Your uncle won't let your name be mentioned in the house, but I never have stopped hoping that if you'd beg his pardon, and show him you were sorry for what you'd done, and that you'd found out what it was to give up your comfortable home" —

"Found out what it was! So I have!" exclaimed the boy, with a rebellious light in his eyes. "I've found a life that suits me better. A life where I am free, and where I can go to the devil my own way, as freely and as surely as he is going to the devil in his own way."

"O, Harry! how can you speak so?" said Miss Melissa, in a horror-struck tone. She had the habit, shared by many good people, of treating the devil's name with as much awe as if it had been God's, so the language shocked her as much as the sentiment.

"Oh! I don't care," said the boy impatiently. "At least, I'm not a hypocrite; so I'm that much better than he is, the old" — He checked himself at the look of distress on his aunt's face, and said, with a sudden change of tone: "Now, Auntie,



you've got to be brave. I know you're naturally timid, and all that, but you've simply got to get the better of it now. I've already said I have not come here to ask any favor for myself, but I have for some one else."

"I'd do anything on earth I could to please you, Harry, but your uncle" —

"Oh! bother my uncle; he ain't in it. Leave him out, please, if you expect me to be decent in my language or anything else. Sit down and listen to what I've got to tell you." He flung his cap on the table and himself into a chair, with a boldness and ease that made Miss Melissa tremble. The old servant, who had staid out of curiosity up to this time, made a feint of going. "No, you stay, Martha. You've got your part to do, too. Now listen."

Miss Melissa had seated herself, and automatically reached for her knitting. She held it idly in her hands, however, as she looked at the boy, with a frightened expectancy.

"Since I went away from here, six months ago," he began, "I've been making my living on



the water, and I've just got back from a long cruise in a sailing-vessel. We had some pretty rough times, and were out in four terrible storms. I believed I was going to be drowned, Auntie, and you were the one I thought of. I was glad you'd never know about it, and I wished I had been better to you." His face grew suddenly quite tender, but when he saw the tears rise to his aunt's eyes, he felt such a fear of giving way to weakness himself, that he cleared his throat and went on in a resolute, energetic tone: "One night, when the storm was over and the moon had come out, I was on deck and I saw something bouncing about on the big waves. I called two or three of the sailors to look at it. They thought it was only some empty box or barrel that had been thrown overboard by a passing vessel; but, even before I could make anything out, I had a feeling that it was not. I felt that there was something alive there, and straining my ears, I thought I heard a little cry or moan. I got the others to listen, but they laughed at me. I declared I could see something like a tiny, human figure;



they laughed still more. The thing was drifting farther away. Suddenly I heard plainly a faint cry. I turned about triumphantly, thinking they had all heard it; but no one had. I knew I was not mistaken, however, and ran to the captain, who liked me, and begged him to stop. At first he refused; but I begged so hard he agreed. Then I ran out on deck and asked who would put out with me in a little boat; they burst out laughing at me.

“I was in an awful hurry, because the thing I still saw was farther away, and I no longer heard any sound. I said I would go by myself, and then an old sailor offered to go with me. There was not much danger. The moon was shining and the wind had gone down, but the waves were very big. We lowered the little boat and got in. The old man and I took the oars and rowed hard, but the waves were so high that we lost sight of the floating object, over and over again. It seemed always going away from us. The lights of the vessel got very far off. Sometimes we could not see the red and green ones hung low, but only



the white one high up on the mast. It was awful work; and the old man with me was about to give up when, rising to the top of a wave, we found ourselves nearer to the object than we had been yet, and a low cry reached us. We both heard it this time. We didn't speak, though; we only pulled away for life. We soon began to gain on it fast, and could see now in the moonlight the figure of a child in a dark dress, lashed to a mattress. When we were quite near the cry came to us again, and I sent back a shout.

“In a few moments more we were almost within reach, but the waves tossed and played with the light mattress so that I was afraid that the child would be drowned before our eyes. At last I caught hold of it and drew it close to the boat. A little girl, with tangled, curly hair falling all around her white, wet face, was tied securely to the mattress. We had trouble to cut her loose, for there were two large life-preservers fastened to her, too. At last we got the last string cut, and I dragged her into the boat. I didn't know whether she was conscious or not, but I spoke to



her and tried to encourage her as I put her down at my feet in the bottom of the boat. I was obliged then to take hold of the oars, but I said all I could think of to comfort her, and told her she was safe, and that I would take her home. She crept between my knees, and put her arms around my waist, and her little head on my breast. I could feel her hugging me and sobbing while I was bending over her to handle the oars, but I took pains not to hurt her.

“When we got to the side of the boat all hands were waiting for us, anxious to help. The child had apparently fainted, and they thought she was dead; but I knew she was not. I carried her in my arms to the captain’s own room, and as I was going to lay her on the bed she opened her eyes and looked at me; then she shut them again and seemed to faint away. But after that look she never forgot me, and always knew me from all the rest. They all did what they could for her, but she said I was the one that had saved her; and she never wanted me to be out of her sight. That was four days ago.”



“Where is she?” said his aunt. Both women were absorbed.

“At the fisherman’s house, where I took her when we landed last night. I told her I would come back for her this afternoon and bring her to my aunt, who would love her and take care of her.”

At this bold statement Miss Melissa started. Martha, also, turned toward him a face of blank dismay.

“But your uncle!” cried the old lady. “He may be back in a few days, and he will never allow it.”

“Don’t ask him. By the time he comes the child will be here, and there will be nowhere to send her to. I do not mean her to be dependent on him!” with an accent of angry contempt. “You can say that the rough, common sailor who rescued her will provide, weekly, enough money to pay her board. I will see that that is done. But be sure that my name is not mentioned in connection with the thing; that would be enough to make him cast the child off.”



Miss Melissa knew too well that this was true, so she and Martha agreed to keep secret his connection with the matter.

“I never would have brought her to his house, if the thing could have been avoided,” said Harry. “By paying for it she could have been taken care of somewhere else; but it is more than food and shelter that she wants. She is a little lady, and she must have a lady to look after her. I think she would die among the people I have left her with to-day.”

“Does she know that her father and mother are probably drowned?”

“Yes; I think she understands it perfectly. She remembers her father kissing her and sinking back in the water after he had held on to her mattress awhile. She says her mother was knocked down by something and fell into the water while her father was tying her to the mattress, and they never saw her again. She remembers it all; and what we have got to do is to try to make her forget it.”

“How old is she?”



“Six years; she says that the Sunday they spent on the sea was her birthday.”

“And does she cry for them?”

The boy got up and turned off toward the window.

“I want you to hear her once,” he said; “that’s why I concluded to bring her to you. I knew if you only saw her once, when she has those spells of crying, you’d never turn her away. If I get her here you’ll keep her.”

“I’d love to keep her, any way,” the old lady said; “but, Harry, I know it won’t be possible. I know your uncle will never allow it.”

He turned around and came toward her with slow, deliberate steps. He was a lad of fifteen, but his manner now was that of a resolute man.

“Aunt Melissa,” he said sternly, “you can make your choice: you can either take this child under your care to-day, and promise me to keep her until your brother comes, and then do your very best to keep her still, explaining,” he added scornfully, “that all her expenses will be paid, and that any trouble she may give will be yours and



not his; or," he added, looking her steadily in the eyes, "you see me go away from you to-day forever. I made up my mind long ago, never to see my uncle again, if I could help it; and if you hesitate now to do what I ask, I will never see you either, so help me God." His stern look terrified her.

"I will do what I can," she said tremblingly.

"I only ask you to let her come. Afterwards, you can decide about the future."

There was balm in these words for a timid mind like Miss Melissa's. The opportunity to temporize was exactly what she wanted. It would be, perhaps, a week more before her dreaded brother's return from a prolonged business trip, and in that time she could make up her mind. So she gave up utterly, and said:

"Go and bring her, Harry. I will do all I can to comfort the little orphan thing."

The boy's face softened. "I knew you would," he said; and he went and kissed her affectionately.

"And you, too, Martha?" he said. "You were good to me when I was a troublesome little child.



Perhaps this child will turn out differently, and repay you for your kindness."

Old Martha was deeply touched by these humble words from the reckless, defiant boy, and gave the promise he exacted with willingness.

"When will you bring her?" said Miss Melissa.

"At once. I promised her she should not spend another night in that wretched place."

The place was of a sort that he was himself accustomed to, in his present mode of life, and he had no other thought in taking the child there than that of establishing her with the fishing-folks amongst whom he lived. But he had not watched her for one hour among such surroundings before he saw that the thing was impossible. He could accommodate himself to these rough ways, but not she. She looked no more at home there than if she had been a bird which had flown in at the window and alighted for a moment, and at the least sound or shock would be up and away. Then he made up his mind he must apply to his aunt, and had puzzled over the matter until he had made it appear feasible.



When he got back to the little hut on the beach, where he had left his charge, a surprise awaited him. The fisherman's wife, a rough, noisy young woman who had frightened the timid child at first, had shown herself, afterwards, much touched by the little creature's misfortunes, and had even made some efforts to prove it. But the child, seeming to recognize in her rescuer in the past, her protector for the future, had clung so resolutely to Harry that she seemed to see and notice no one else. He had left her asleep when he had gone away in the morning, and now, in going back, he hurried all he could, for fear that in waking she would have missed him and been inconsolable for his absence.

When he pushed open the door of the poor little house and entered, the woman was sitting in a low chair, with the little child on her lap. The older face was bronzed and weather-beaten, and far from beautiful to see. The other was fair and delicate, with a great mass of shining gold curls that clustered around her cheeks. The little white hands were clasped about the woman's sunburnt



throat, and the two cheeks rested against each other. Two pairs of eyes looked up at him as he entered; one pair small and dark and unintellectual, the other large and blue and full of an intelligent consciousness; but both had love in them, and the boy knew that it was this that had established a kinship between the pair, incongruous as they seemed.

The child had waked crying, and had called eagerly for Harry, whose name was already familiar to her lips. Finding him gone, she had been frightened and had fallen into a fit of sobbing. The woman had gone to her to try to give her comfort, and the paroxysm had spent itself on her kind breast.

Harry foresaw that the fisherman's wife would not give her up without regret, but in talking that morning together, she had agreed with him that this child was "not fur the likes o' we," as she expressed it. She was, therefore, heartily and unselfishly glad when the boy told her that his mission had succeeded.



## II.

MISS MELISSA and Martha were a frightened pair as they went about their preparations for the child's reception. Old Mr. Arnold was a man much dreaded, both in his own household and beyond it. He had been for many years engaged in business in the town near which his fine old country residence was situated, and he had accumulated quite a good fortune. He was said to be a merciless creditor, and close and penurious in all his dealings. He believed himself to be one of the most upright of men, and the unpardonable sin that his nephew had committed was that he had refused to follow in the footsteps of so worthy an example. If the boy, who had neither father nor mother, had walked obediently and unquestioningly in the path marked out for him by his uncle, the old man would have felt great pride



in him ; would have indoctrinated him into the methods by which he, himself, had been so successful, and would have left the boy his whole fortune. He had begun by being extremely fond of the child, but as the latter got older, he showed great self-will and impulsiveness of disposition, and the uncle found himself conscientiously bound to whip him a great deal, and to act toward him, at all times, with great severity. An estrangement sprang up between them, which, in spite of Miss Melissa's efforts to mediate, strengthened and ripened with years, and had finally ended by the lad's running away from school, under circumstances which confirmed his uncle in his belief that he was a bad, incorrigible boy, of whom it was more than useless to expect anything. The circumstances were these :

When Mr. Arnold, wishing to break the boy's defiant spirit, was looking for a school at which to put him, the establishment of a certain Dr. Martin was highly recommended to him, as a place where vigorous discipline was associated with correct religious training. He took the pains to travel



to the place, to confer with Dr. Martin, feeling that he was doing a very praiseworthy act in giving up two whole days of his important time to this matter. He found the experienced doctor's views so in accordance with his own, that he returned in a state of great satisfaction, and Harry was promptly sent off to the school. Not, however, before the boy had been compelled to listen to an exordium which almost drove him frantic. The high moral stand which was taken by his uncle, and the implied reference to himself as the standard of virtue and excellence was almost more than the boy could bear — much more than he could bear meekly — and he showed a spirit of indifference and only half-concealed rebelliousness during the interview, which caused his uncle to send him off with a letter to the new teacher, exhorting him to spare no effort of either physical or moral suasion to conquer this obdurate heart.

The consequence was that Harry began his school-life with a reputation which was quietly passed from teachers to pupils, of being an unusually difficult case. The behest of his uncle was



conscientiously regarded. It was one of the boasts of Dr. Martin's school that ninety per cent. of the boys educated there made what was called "a profession of religion" before leaving. The utmost pains was taken not to break this record, and the path of the rebellious was made so hard, and that of the submissive so easy, that Harry, after some months of fluctuation, went with the majority. He allowed himself to be prayed over, in public and private, assented to all the assertions of his own depravity, and was soon reported to his uncle as being "under conviction." Then his path became more easy. He was allowed privileges, hitherto withheld; the teachers and authorities of the school looked upon him kindly; he had smiles and pleasant words from everyone, as well as the more substantial benefits of nice tit-bits at table, and excuses from lessons, and the accounts sent home about him were of the most encouraging character.

The boy was not wholly hypocritical in what he did. It was quite true that he believed himself a miserable sinner, in need of help. He had been



told that so long, that it had become one of the foremost of his convictions concerning himself. But, somehow, the state of grace into which he was assured by Dr. Martin that he had entered, failed to make him feel any better. He felt unconsciously degraded by the rewards he received for his conformity, and perhaps knew in his heart that it was for the sake of these that he had conformed. He felt himself a worse boy for being good, from such a motive, than he had felt in open rebellion and insubordination. It was easy to drift with the stream, however, and the weapons for moral warfare that were within his reach were extremely feeble at that time, so he went with the majority, and for a long time was ranked with the good boys. At last, the great day came when Dr. Martin's school was marched to church one Sunday, in order that the large proportion who had "professed religion," might go forward in the eyes of the great congregation assembled, and be received into the visible church. As a prelude to this ceremony, however, there was a sermon on the subject of the horrors of hell, intended to incite



the repentance of the rebellious and the self-gratulation of the conforming.

Harry Arnold listened to this sermon with feelings of intense agitation. Thought and conviction had played but a small part in what was termed his conversion; but now, for the first time, he began to think, and he knew that any profession of love and service to a Being who seemed to him so monstrous and cruel as the God whom the preacher described would be the blackest falsehood. His heart swelled with protest; his eyes flashed indignation; and when, at the close of the sermon, the boys, led by Dr. Martin, got up to go forward to the chancel, Harry alone, of the large number who had been placed conveniently in the front ranks for this purpose, kept his seat. His face was scarlet, his eyes flashing, and he had folded his arms tight across his breast, in an attitude unconsciously impressive. The terrible eye of Dr. Martin was upon him, but he met it boldly, with a firm shake of the head. A breathless suspense followed. The other boys, in orderly pairs, had gone forward, and the minister



and congregation waited. Dr. Martin made his way along the empty bench to where he sat and spoke to him sternly, telling him to come. His answer was firm in utterance, though low in tone:

“I am not going.”

“Are you ill? Do you want me to say you will postpone it until next time?”

“No; I am not ill at all. I am never going, at any time.”

There was no use to argue with a tone and expression like that, and the delay was only making matters worse. Dr. Martin turned his back upon him, went forward to the chancel and notified the officiating minister that the service might proceed. As it began, all eyes were turned, not upon the ceremony that was going on in front, but upon the flushed, defiant face of the lad who sat isolated from the crowd around, by large spaces of empty seats before, behind, and at each side of him.

His first thought had been escape. He had intended, as soon as Dr. Martin should be gone, to leave the church, but it now seemed to him



that that would be cowardly. He would stay and brave it out. Strange to say, as he sat there removed from contact with his fellow-creatures, like a poor outcast quarantined for some loathsome physical disease, he felt a thrill of triumphant self-approbation, such as he had never known before. It could not be his conscience that applauded him. By all known rules, that should have been his severest arraigner now. Whatever it was, he felt its comfort to be sweet, and its support sufficient. He was a handsome lad, with the strong figure, rich dark skin and curly hair, that, in a boy of his age, make such a winning impression; and now, with the heightened brilliancy of cheeks and eyes, he looked his very best. Many a tender woman's eye was turned upon him pityingly, thinking how sad it was to see, in one so young and charming, so strong a tendency to sin and evil.

Harry held his head well up, and his eyes wide open and fearless, as he marched out of church after the services were over. The orderly and soldier-like marching of the boys was a subject of



great pride in the school; and now, as they fell into ranks, two and two, Harry's cheeks tingled as he found himself alone. Dr. Martin had called the boy with whom he had marched to church to his own side, and so Harry was without a companion. As soon as he understood that this had been done designedly, he went forward, outwardly unmoved, keeping time as carefully as possible, and appearing not to notice that a little interval had been made between himself and the ranks of boys ahead, and those behind him. This made it more difficult to keep time, but it made apparent his soldierly carriage and excellent movement. He was taller than most of the boys, and this fact added to the conspicuousness forced upon him. He would have been glad to avoid it, but he had no notion of flinching or showing weakness of any sort. If he was to be held up as a bad boy, they might hate him all they chose, but they should not pity him. He felt that he still had the power to command the respect always given to courage, and it took courage to go through with the ordeal he had entered into now.



That ordeal by no means ended here. He waited to see what his punishment was to be. It came in a peculiarly trying form. He could have braced himself to stand a flogging. He could easily have his food cut off, or his privileges of recreation curtailed. But his trial was to be a severer thing than any of these. It was to take the form of what had already stung him so — to put him in the place of a pariah, whom no one was allowed to approach. He had the same food as the others, but he had to eat it at a table apart. He might come into the playground, but no boy was allowed to speak to him. Even at prayers he had a chair placed for him away from the rest.

It was intensely mortifying, but he found that a certain sense of satisfaction could be got out of it, by enduring it well. He knew that any insubordination against the rules that were laid upon him would be a source of satisfaction to his teachers, and would afford them a desired opportunity of imposing further punishment upon him. He resolved not to give them this satisfaction. It was that motive, and no higher one, that



caused him to accept his punishment without remonstrance.

One supreme source of pride he possessed in the fact that his place at the head of the class, in all the branches of mathematics, was unimpeachable. It was balm to his hurt feelings at this time, to take his place at the blackboard and demonstrate with ease the difficult problems which the little "professed Christians" struggled with in vain. He prepared his lessons with unusual care, and was always sure of one hour, throughout the long, hard day, in which his place was foremost. This gave him strength to endure the rest. Dr. Martin had always complimented him on his power of grasping the problems of mathematics, and had particularly praised him for his habit of stating the sums in his own language, instead of conforming unintelligently to the statements of the book.

It is probable that his teacher perceived the fact that this mathematics lesson was a source of triumphant satisfaction to the ostracised boy, and that he grudged him such a pleasure. However



that may be, one morning when Harry with great care had gone to the blackboard, on the dais in front of the class, and demonstrated a very difficult problem, to his own entire satisfaction, he was astonished to hear Dr. Martin tell him that his demonstration was wrong. He had put it in his own language, but he knew it was correct. It flashed through him that his teacher meant to humiliate him in his one place of pride. That consciousness made him feel the need of wariness and self-control.

“What mistake have I made, sir?” he said.

The doctor then stated the problem in the words of the book.

“That was exactly what I said, sir,” said Harry calmly.

“You did not. You stated the problem incorrectly,” said the doctor angrily.

“I stated the problem, not in the exact words of the book, but I stated it absolutely correctly,” said the boy.

“Do you mean to defy me, sir?” cried the doctor furiously. “I tell you, you lie.”



On the desk in front of him there was a heavy iron inkstand. Harry, maddened by the injustice of this determination to humiliate him, seized this inkstand and hurled it at the doctor's head, with a force that would inevitably have killed him, had the missile struck. The doctor dodged it just in time, and it went against the wall behind him, crashing a great hole in the plaster. It rebounded, scattering a dark stream, and fell on the floor at the boy's feet. He stood with his hands clenched, expecting an attack, and ready and willing for it. But the doctor, ghastly pale and almost breathless, ordered him to his room. Harry's anger subsided instantly. The man was afraid of him! He turned on his heel, letting the breath escape through his teeth with a sort of half-whistle, expressive of infinite scorn. It was not an articulate word, but it said plainly enough:

“Coward!”

He marched out and to his own room, closing the door behind him. It was not long before he heard a key turned in the lock outside, and he knew he was a prisoner. A mood of intense



bitterness came over him. He hated all the world, but most of all he hated himself. The minister, who had preached in church on Sunday, could not have wished his penitents to have a deeper "conviction of sin" than this boy felt in his breast now. He recognized within himself an aggregation of bad passions, anger, defiance, revenge, hatred, pride, envy, rebellion, that made him feel himself utterly lost.

It didn't occur to him to kill himself, but he passionately wished that he had never lived. He didn't blame people for hating him; there was nothing to rouse or respond to love in him. He was sorry Miss Melissa's gentle life had ever been troubled by him, and he thought of poor old Martha, too. He resolved to go away and lose himself, and so rid them of a curse. His belief in his own wickedness was supreme, and there was not one gleam of hope across the blackness. All his religious instruction had failed to give him one impression of the love of God. If he thought of God as a factor in his existence at all, it was as a resistless power only. That power might cast



him into hell, but this idea did not terrify him. The creed of the fatalist protected him there. If it was to be, it was to be, and there was no use troubling about it before it came.

He walked about the room with his hands in his pockets, chafing under the temporary restraint. He had resolved that it should be temporary, but he would have to wait until nightfall to carry out his scheme. The hours that intervened were a time of torture. Not a ray of hope or thought of love came to soften him. He knew that Miss Melissa loved and prayed for him, but he seemed so unworthy of her love and so utterly beyond her prayers, that the thought failed to touch him. She would be much happier when she was finally rid of him, and there would not be the endless reprimands and protests from her dreaded brother, of which he was the occasion.

He wondered how he was going to make a living, and a natural love for the sea, which had been stimulated by the books of adventure he had read, decided him to go to the coast, not far away, and look for employment on some vessel going



out. He had thought of this before, but now the moment of action was come. He knew it would be final, as far as its effect upon any future intercourse with his uncle was concerned, but that was a reason for and not against it. He was anxious to have done with his past life, completely and at once. Feeling that his aunt would be far happier without him, he had no regrets for it. He knew perfectly well that his uncle would never receive or recognize him again, and he felt a sense of freedom at being rid of the obligation which his protection of and provision for him had subjected him to.

When supper-time came, a meagerly furnished tray was brought in to him by one of the under-teachers, who looked half-afraid to enter the room. Later, the same man came to take it away, and Harry was offered the privilege of going down to prayers. This he declined, and the lock was again turned upon him from the outside.

The hour had now come for which he had waited. He put into a hand-bag as many clothes as it would hold, and into his pocket his few



valuables, and what money he had. Then he dropped the bag out of the window into the flower-bed underneath, and then lowered himself from the sill, as far as his arms would reach, and from there fell to the ground. It was not very far, and he was unhurt. He took up his bag, settled his hat on his head, looked stealthily around, then struck out boldly through the trees, and was soon lost in the shadows.

That was the beginning of his new life. He walked to the coast and found a sailing-vessel about to start on a cruise. Without much difficulty he secured a position on board, and sailed away the very next morning.

His disappearance, together with the events that preceded it, were duly reported to his uncle in a long and edifying letter from Dr. Martin. The facts were a good deal embellished by the play of the Doctor's imagination, but even without any embellishment they were enough. The fiat went forth that from henceforth Harry was disowned. Miss Melissa was forbidden, under the penalty of her brother's severe displeasure, to hold any



communication whatever with the miscreant, a command not difficult to obey, since the boy made no sign and they had no hint of what had become of him.

In this way six months had gone by, and, except in Miss Melissa's timid but loving heart, the subject of the runaway boy was utterly ignored. Even if she had dared, there was nothing to be said in his favor. His shortcomings had to be admitted, and to the conscious rectitude of her brother, a shortcoming of any kind was a thing not to be tolerated.

So the pair lived on, alone and isolated, in their comfortable old home. It was solitary and gloomy, in spite of its comfort; but if Miss Melissa thought so she did not express the thought, while her brother, feeling that his own morality and uprightness were thrown into stronger relief by his nephew's contrasted behavior, seemed absolutely satisfied. His business affairs went well; his bank account was rolling up; he was an example to others, and a satisfaction to himself; and the fortunes of that rebellious boy



who had gone wrong, in the very presence of such a model, appeared to be a topic with which he did not concern his busy mind.

It was upon this condition of affairs that Harry had entered, with the proposition to his aunt to charge herself with the care of the child he had rescued.

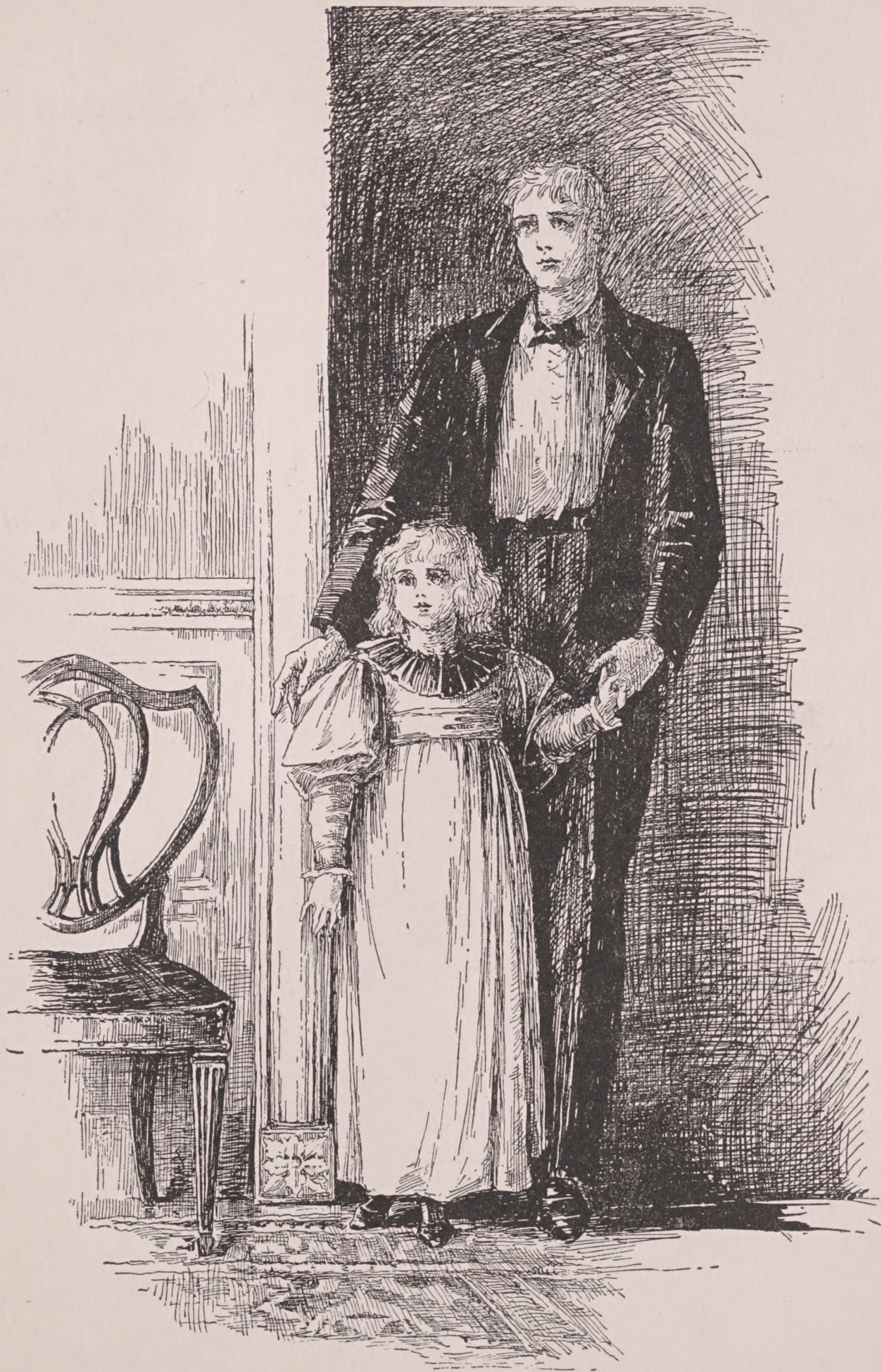


### III.

MISS MELISSA and Martha were in a state of secret agitation, which neither confided to the other, as they awaited the arrival of Harry and the child. The old lady's kindness of heart, and wish to oblige her nephew, were struggling violently with her dread of her brother. When Martha reported that the expected arrivals were in sight, Miss Melissa did not go to the door. She had a sort of feeling that she might encounter the eyes of her dreaded brother, though she knew him to be many miles away.

She was seated in a rocking-chair with her knitting, when the door opened and Harry entered, leading a little girl by the hand. The child's appearance was odd, partly on account of her face, which, both in outline and expression, was certainly unusual for a child, and partly on account of her dress.





HARRY ENTERED, LEADING A LITTLE GIRL BY THE HAND.







She wore a little scant gown of dark-blue flannel, that reached almost to the floor. It was made with a very short waist, and had a wide belt of black braid. There were picturesque puffs on the shoulders, and a soft, black frill falling downward from a little slender throat that was white as milk. Her hair, a perfect golden glory, was not long, but it curled round her fair face in a thick, fine fluff, and her large, dark-blue eyes were set under definitely-marked, decided eyebrows, and shaded with long, dark lashes. Her face was very pale, and her delicately modelled chin was as firm and decided as any matured man's could have been. She stopped short, just within the door, and holding on to Harry's hand, she looked at Miss Melissa with a glance of scrutinizing interest, from under her slightly contracted brows. Miss Melissa got up, her heart instinctively touched by such delicate loveliness. She went over and took the child's hand affectionately, and then sat down in the nearest chair and drew the little creature toward her.

“Dear child!” she said; “poor, darling baby!



Give me a sweet kiss, and tell me what your name is."

The child accepted the caress, but did not return it. She had still that little frown on her forehead as she answered: "Amy Erskine Leigh."

The first words she uttered stamped her as a foreigner. She might speak the English tongue, but the very tones of her voice were distinctly un-American.

"And do you know where you were born?" asked Miss Melissa.

"At Compton," said the child promptly.

"And where is Compton?"

There was a moment's hesitation, and then the answer came in a rather severe tone:

"I should think you would know without being told."

"But I don't, my dearie, and I want you to tell me. Where is Compton?"

There was a more perceptible hesitation this time before the child replied:

"I don't know where it is, but I should think a grown person would know."



It was plain that she regarded Miss Melissa's ignorance with a certain scorn. The old lady felt unaccountably humiliated, but she went on with her questions:

"Do you know what your father's name was, dear?" she asked next. "What did your mother call him?"

"Of course I know my papa's name — George Fairfax Leigh."

"And your mother's name, darling?"

"Sybil," answered the child.

"But what was her name before she was married?"

"I suppose her name was always Sybil," said the child, with dignity, as if she wished that statement to close the discussion.

"And do you know where you were coming when you got on the big boat with your father and mother?"

"Amellika," said the child gravely, her rather haughty manner conferring such dignity on her grotesque pronunciation of the word that the old lady did not venture to laugh.



“But what place in America? What State or town?” she asked.

“I should think you’d know more about it than me,” said the child. “I suppose you have always lived in America.”

Her quick ear had caught the correct sound of the word, and she uttered it this time with a distinctness that was a direct repudiation of her error in the first instance. Miss Melissa turned her face away to hide a smile.

Harry, who during their drive over, had told the child as much as he thought best of the establishment she was about to enter, and of his own relationship to it, now felt that he must go away. When he stated his intention the child clung to his hand more tightly, and Miss Melissa half-timidly asked him to stay and get some dinner.

“Not in this house,” said the boy, with an angry toss of the head. “I wouldn’t be in it now, but for some one else’s sake, and I’d rather starve than touch his bread. Good-by, Auntie.”

“O, Harry dear! don’t talk that wicked way,” said his aunt, in a piteous tone.



“Harry is right, and he’s not the one that’s wicked. It’s somebody else,” said the child, with decision. “I wouldn’t stay, either, unless Harry paid my board; but he’s going to do that, and he wants me to stay, and I will do what he tells me, because he saved my life, and it’s my duty to do as he tells me. He says he won’t be under any obrogation to his uncle, and neither will I. He says you will take all the trouble about me, and he don’t mind being under obrogations to you; but I will try to take care of myself and not to give you trouble.”

“That’s right, Amy,” said the boy, taking up his cap and preparing to leave. “I’ll come to see you soon. I’m going to stay ashore awhile now, and I’ll watch my chance when he is out of the way. Here, Auntie,” he said, taking something from his pocket, “I suppose this will cover expenses until I come again.”

“O, Harry! I couldn’t take it from you, dear. Indeed I couldn’t.”

“I’ll take it,” said the child, “and I’ll put it in her purse and make her use it. You mustn’t



think he means to hurt your feelings, Auntie," she said, using the title as if unconsciously.

"Of course she'll need some clothes," said the boy, "and part of it can go for that; I will bring more next time I come."

It made him feel very grand indeed, to be able to provide for the child in this way; and he had, without hesitation, devoted to this purpose the entire earnings of his voyage. As the child took the money from him and put it into the pocket of her dress, Miss Melissa had no opportunity to see how large a sum it was. Afterwards, when it was given into her keeping, she counted it with surprise.

"Good-by, Auntie," said the boy, going over and kissing her in a quick way that showed he wanted to get the parting over. "Good-by, Amy."

He bent to kiss her cheek, but she threw both arms around his neck and hugged him tight. He heard a little sound in her throat that made him fear she was going to have one of her crying spells, which distressed him so, but the next



moment she had given him a quiet kiss and drawn away.

“You needn’t be afraid,” she said, “I’m not going to cry; I want to, but I won’t.”

She set her little teeth firmly, and walked over to Miss Melissa and took her stand beside her, with an air of the strongest resolution. There were two tear-drops on her cheeks, but she ignored them so entirely that she did not even wipe them away. She bent her head and bowed him a brave good-by as he turned back at the door, and she gazed at him with eyes that looked as if they had never known what it was to weep.

Miss Melissa left her entirely to herself, as she turned and walked to the window and stood there looking out until the sound of retreating wheels had died away. Then she turned round, with fresh tears on her face, and, in a voice resolutely controlled, said:

“Will you lend me a handkerchief, Auntie?”

When Miss Melissa had complied, she wiped first one eye and then the other, and then delicately blew her nose.



“I am sorry I could not help crying a little,” she said; “but I’ve done now. Please don’t say anything to me about Harry, or my papa and mamma, until to-morrow. Then you can ask me what you choose.”

Poor child! how tired of questions she must be. Miss Melissa inwardly resolved to spare her any more, for the present, at least.

The little girl, having handed back the handkerchief, now turned to examine her surroundings. She walked round the room, looking closely at all its comfortable appointments, glancing through the open door along the hall, and then approaching Miss Melissa, said in a quiet, thoughtful tone:

“I like this house.”

Miss Melissa felt sensibly gratified.

“I’m very glad,” she answered; “I will do all I can to make you comfortable and happy.”

“I don’t expect to be happy,” said the little creature, “but I am sure I shall be very comfortable, and I will try not to give you trouble. Could I go now and see where I am to sleep?”

“Certainly, darling. I have had a little bed



put for you right by mine. I don't know how we will do hereafter, but you will stay there for the present." She thought it best not to let the child look upon the existing arrangements as permanent.

When they had mounted the wide, old-fashioned staircase and entered Miss Melissa's big, comfortable room, with the two white-covered beds placed side by side, the child again expressed her satisfaction by saying, in the same simple, decisive way:

"I like this room."

Then she asked if she could take off her dress and bathe her face and hands, saying they were dusty from the drive. Martha, who had followed them upstairs, came forward to help her, but the child, thanking her courteously, declined her assistance, saying:

"Mamma liked me to wait on myself; she said we couldn't afford to have everything done for us. So she taught me to dress and undress myself."

She had taken off her quaint little gown, and Miss Melissa, observing the fineness and delicacy of all the garments the child wore, was confirmed



in her conviction that her parents must have been people of the highest refinement.

“That fisherman’s wife was kind and good to me,” the child said. “I asked her to wash and iron my clothes, and staid in bed while she did it. I couldn’t take a very comfortable bath, you know, because there wasn’t any place, and the soap looked really dirty and smelt bad, and the towel scratched my skin. May I take a warm bath in a big tub to-night?”

“Certainly you may, my darling.”

Turning to Martha, Amy asked her to pour out some water for her. She was too little to reach the bowl comfortably, so she brought a small stool across the room and mounted upon it and began her careful ablutions. Miss Melissa noticed that she did not satisfy herself with a cake of soap until she had deliberately smelled all three that the dish contained. She asked permission to use Miss Melissa’s nail-brush, and manipulated it with great skill, inspecting her nails as she wiped her hands, to be sure that they were perfectly cleansed.



“Could I possibly get a tooth-brush this afternoon?” she asked now. “I’ve been cleaning my teeth with a rag; but if you had a tooth-brush you could give me—though I could wait until to-morrow, if you haven’t.”

Martha was almost convulsed by this time, but Miss Melissa quietly handed her a key and told her to look in a certain place and get a tooth-brush. She added, however, that she feared it would be too large.

“O, thanks! that will do. I don’t mind its being large,” said the child, with satisfaction, taking the tooth-brush from Martha and beginning to use it with much force and self-possession. After this was over she walked across to the dressing-table, and with Miss Melissa’s permission, began to brush out her golden locks.

When the pale-gold hair was in order, the child handed her dress to Martha and asked her to brush it. The good creature, still suppressing her inclination to laugh, did as she was requested; and as she handed it back, said, with what she meant to be her politest manner:



“Here’s your dress, Amy; nice and clean.”

“Thanks,” said the child, taking it; “but you’re to call me Miss Amy, please. Mamma never allowed the maids to call me Amy; I don’t want to be unpolite, and I hope you won’t mind my telling you. Of course you didn’t know.”

Miss Melissa thought the time had come for a little essential correction, and was about to speak when Martha, seeing her purpose, looked at her deprecatingly.

“Of course I’ll call her Miss, if it’ll please her,” she said in a low tone. “Who wouldn’t want to do anything they could to remind the child of her home? If it’s what she has been used to, I’m sure it’s a small thing for me to do.”

Amy was now entirely done with her toilet. The little gown was carefully fastened, and the big rosette that closed her belt flattened into place, and the clean-faced, neat-handed little creature walked over to Miss Melissa, and taking her hand, without speaking, manifested her readiness to go downstairs.

They met a servant coming to announce din-



ner, and so they went at once to the dining-room. There was no seat in it adapted to a child's occupancy, and a cushion had to be put into one of the old-fashioned, high-backed, leather chairs. As Amy mounted upon this, she glanced across to Miss Melissa, who sat opposite, and said simply:

“Shall I say grace?” and then, taking the other's wondering silence for assent, she bent her head and uttered distinctly a short and reverential form of blessing and thanksgiving. It was evidently an established habit with her, and she had no suspicion that there was anything surprising in it.

She now unfolded her napkin with great deliberation and tucked one end of it under her chin, and waited to be helped. She rejected all but the simplest and most wholesome food, saying mamma never allowed her to eat rich things. She knew perfectly what she might and what she might not take; but after making her selections she ate so heartily, that Miss Melissa pityingly divined how starved the little creature must have been. When she had finished, she put her knife and fork in



place with great precision, neatly folded her napkin, and sat quite still and silent until Miss Melissa rose.

On leaving the table, a feeling that she was entertaining a guest of importance caused Miss Melissa, half-unconsciously, to lead the way to the rather stately drawing-room, instead of the apartment for more ordinary use.

Amy walked about and inspected the room, after having asked Miss Melissa's permission, and finally came back to where the old lady sat in a deep arm-chair, and expressed by a little motion that she wanted to be taken on her lap. Miss Melissa lifted her willingly, and then the child, of her own accord, began to talk of her parents.

"I wish papa and mamma could see this house. I am sure they would like it. They have always loved old-fashioned things. Papa used to say that was why he liked me — because I was so old-fashioned."

She spoke of them as naturally as if they were still living, and seemed now to be able to recall them without pain. Of course she could not



realize what death meant, and at six the mind is easily diverted. Miss Melissa felt both glad and sorry, as she heard her talk — glad that she was able, in giving the child again the comforts to which she had been accustomed, to fill a part of the void left by the loss of her parents, but sorry to be compelled to feel that the present arrangement could not last. It would have been the delight of her heart if she could have kept this dear child with her always, and she would not have felt the trouble worth counting, but she knew her brother too well to suppose, for one moment, that he would allow it. Even if she screwed up her courage to keep the child until he came, she was sure he would order her to be sent away. So she sighed deeply as she looked down at the sweet piece of child-flesh perched so comfortably on her knee, and forced herself to pave the way for the change that she knew must come.

“Yes, it’s a nice old house,” she said, “and I’m glad to have a dear little girl like you to come and stay with me in it, sometimes. My brother often



goes away on business, and when he is away you can come and make me visits."

"I don't want to go away from here," the child replied. "Harry said I was to stay with you. Are you going to send me back to that fisherman's house? It was dirty and hot; I don't want to stay there. I want to stay with you."

"No, no; you shall never go back there," said Miss Melissa, drawing her close and bending to kiss the top of her gold head. "To-morrow I'll take you to town, and I'll buy you some nice dresses, and hats, and shoes, and under-clothes, and then, after you are all ready, I'll put you at a nice school, somewhere," she went on, the idea taking form in her mind as she spoke; "a school where there are other children, and you can learn to read and write, and I'll give you pretty story-books, and you shall write me nice letters and tell me everything you do."

Miss Melissa had a little money of her own with which she now proposed to herself to do this. She managed her brother's house and cared for him in every way, but he never thought of



giving her anything but the most meager return for her services, and it never occurred to her to want or expect more. However, she was very economical, and she had enough to make this scheme seem practicable, with the help Harry could give. The vision was, therefore, so delightful to her that she was disappointed to see that it seemed to find no favor with the child.

“I don’t want to go to school,” she said. “My mamma said I should never go away to school. I heard her say so, and my papa said she was right. I want to stay here with you. Please let me. Harry wants me to, and I’ll be good.”

She rubbed her soft head against Miss Melissa’s cheek as affectionately as a kitten.

“I wish I could. I wish I could, with all my heart,” said the old lady; “but you know, darling, this house isn’t mine. It belongs to my brother, and he is not used to children, and does not like them. You couldn’t be happy here with some one you were afraid of — could you? It would be a great deal happier for you at a nice school, where there were little children for you to play with.”



It was in vain to try to win her over to this view. It seemed enough for her that her father and mother had not wished her to go away to school, and that Harry had said she was to stay with Auntie. She seemed incapable of understanding that the wish of her parents was not still to be the law of her life, or that Harry, who had rescued her from death, was not the best judge as to what should be done with her.



#### IV.

IT was a pleasant afternoon and evening that Miss Melissa spent with the child. They took a delightful walk, and Amy inspected everything about the premises with great interest. The flower-garden filled her with delight, and she clasped her hands in a state of ecstasy before a great rose-bush, heavy with crimson blossoms and green leaves. After standing a moment absorbing its beauty, she began to smell rose after rose, drawing in the perfume of each with an intensity of enjoyment which the unemotional old maid looked upon with amazement. She had probably not had as much sensation in a year's experience, as Amy got out of that rose-bush in a moment.

It was almost dark when she returned to the house, and the child, being a little puzzled by the customs she observed about her, asked hesitat-



ingly, if she was to be allowed to come to dinner, saying that papa and mamma always permitted her, if there were no guests.

“Of course, child, you’ll always come to the table with me, but we’ve been to dinner. That was dinner we had at two o’clock. We will have supper now.”

“Oh! excuse me,” said Amy; “it is a little different, you see. I’m sorry I can’t dress for dinner — for supper. I always dress in the evening, at home, and when I have some clothes, I will here; but now, of course, I can’t.”

Miss Melissa willingly dispensed with this formality, and they got through their evening meal very comfortably without it. Afterwards, Amy sat on Miss Melissa’s lap and fell into a voluble flow of talk. In her present mood, it seemed a pleasure to her to speak of her home and parents, and she gave a beautiful impression of the love and mutual care that had pervaded all. She avoided the painful subject of the wreck, and told Miss Melissa, confidentially, of the disconcerting discomforts which she had had to put up with in





H.M. ARMSTRONG

SHE BEGAN TO SMELL ROSE AFTER ROSE.







the fisherman's hut. She had been very much frightened, too, by the master of the house, who she said was a cross old man, who frowned at her. But she spoke with the deepest gratitude of the young woman's kindness, and, of Harry, with an enthusiastic ardor. He was so brave, so strong, so handsome, she said, and now she would always think of him as the best friend she had in the world. She seemed to have no near relations in England, and Miss Melissa's questions elicited no knowledge of anyone who had a stronger claim upon her than themselves. Her assumption that Harry was now her guardian and protector seemed to be the true state of the case.

When nine o'clock struck, Amy rose to her feet and said it was bedtime — mamma never allowed her to stay up later than nine. So Miss Melissa led her off upstairs.

They found Martha sitting by the lamp, stitching away on a nightgown, which she had been busily adapting from Miss Melissa's form to Amy's. The warm bath, already bespoke, was soon prepared for her, and when she came out of it, damp



and rosy, and smelling of sweet soap, she put on, with delight, the improvised garment, in which she looked very innocent and unconscious as she came and knelt at Miss Melissa's knee, to say her prayers.

After going through one or two forms of prayer, she said fervently, "God bless my dear papa and mamma," and then, after a little pause, she added the names of Harry, Miss Melissa, Martha, and the fisherman's wife. Then, in conclusion, she said, "And bless that bad old man, and make him good." This caused Miss Melissa to fear she had received some cruel treatment from the old fisherman, which, with her power of self-control, she had not chosen to divulge. She thought it best, however, to ask no questions, and so she only kissed the little creature warmly, when she rose from her knees, and then went to tuck her in bed. The child nestled down into the soft, sweet bedclothes, like a downy chicken in its nest, saying, as Miss Melissa bent over her:

"Oh! it seems so good and comfy. Mamma used to ask me every night, 'Are you comfy, dar-



ling?' — and I haven't been comfy for so long." These were her last words before falling into a delicious sleep.

The days that followed were busy ones for Miss Melissa, and for Amy and Martha, too. Mr. Arnold had written that he would not be back for a week, and so that gave them all a temporary respite. The child had to be taken into the town and equipped in every way, and Miss Melissa was more than willing to draw on her little savings for the purpose. It was a funny sight to watch Amy when the purchases were being made. Her mother's standard of taste and judgment was the one adhered to, and Amy manifested the most decided likes and dislikes, and amused the milliners and store-keepers no less than Miss Melissa by her positive way of settling all disputed points.

She seemed to remember every article of her lost wardrobe, and as it was not an elaborate or expensive one, Miss Melissa decided to humor her in her strong desire to replace them all, as nearly as possible. She could not help marveling at the cleverness of the child's descriptions. She



ordered all her dresses to be made with long skirts and short waists, and absolutely rejected all finery and furbelows, though she would critically inspect all materials shown, feeling them delicately with her thumb and forefinger, discarding the coarse textures and choosing the fine, with a splendid disregard of the question of expense. She positively refused even to try on the hats chosen for her by the milliner, and selected a great Gainsborough with nodding white plumes, and wide ribbons tied at her left ear. She directed the woman how to tie it, and at what angle to put it on, and she looked so absolutely bewitching in it that Miss Melissa let her keep it. For every-day wear, she rejected the large shade-hat offered, and chose a demure little white sun-bonnet that could be easily washed, and that suited her to perfection.

One afternoon, a few days later, Martha came upstairs and told the child that Harry had come, and wanted to see her. She was full of delight at this announcement, and begged Martha, in great glee, to get out her best white dress and her big hat, for her to put on to see him. Martha com-



plied, as she promptly did to every wish the child expressed, and Amy brushed her golden locks carefully, and tied on her hat, and bright and spotless as a little fresh-opened lily, went down to see her young hero.

The young hero was not in the best of humors. Miss Melissa was out, and he had been left alone in the familiar sitting-room that had been the scene of so much that was painful in the past. His present mode of life was very hard and rough, and it had made its mark upon him outwardly. Not only had he, through his association with coarse and reckless men, learned to use their language, and, to some extent, even to engage in their low pleasures, but he had got careless in his personal habits. His dress was not only coarse, it was extremely untidy. His nails and hands were far from clean, his hair was shaggy and uncombed, and there was an odor about his clothes that was an unsavory mingling of the smells of fish and bad tobacco. He was standing in the floor, with a scowl on his face, and some rather bitter thoughts in his mind, when suddenly a little



figure, in exquisite, spotless white, came running toward him, the light fineness of her long white garment fluttering in the sweet summer air. Her two little arms were outstretched, and she would have thrown them around his neck, but that he sprang back and put a chair between them.

“Don’t!” he said; “you mustn’t touch me. I’m a dirty brute to come where you are, like this.”

The child stopped short, with a look of hurt disappointment on her face. The tears sprang to her eyes, but she made a tremendous effort and kept them back, winking violently. The boy still stood holding the chair between them. Without advancing further, Amy sat down.

“Auntie will be in directly,” she said; “I suppose you came to see her.”

“No, Amy, I came to see you. Don’t be angry, darling, because I wouldn’t let you kiss me. It was only because I wasn’t fit. I’ve been hauling fish, and I’m all dirty with them.”

“I should think you might have taken a bath,” she said, in a matter-of-fact tone.

“So I might — but I didn’t think of it. I will



next time. Don't look at me now, baby; I'm ashamed of myself. But let me look at you. Why, how beautiful and stunning you are!"

"I'm ashamed of *myself* now," said the child, "to be dressed in all these beautiful things and you looking so poor and dirty."

"But I needn't look poor and dirty, darling. It's my own fault, don't you see? — and because I'm a brute. I can be clean if I choose, and you'll never see me looking like this again."

At this moment Miss Melissa came in, and while Harry turned to speak to her, the child quietly slipped from the room.

She made her way upstairs and quickly took off her white hat and frock, putting on, instead, the little blue flannel in which she had been rescued. Then, with a puzzled expression on her face, she stood thoughtfully looking out of the window a little while, her mind evidently working rapidly. Presently she heard her name called. It was Harry's voice, sounding bright and cheerful now. She flew across the room and down the staircase, at the bottom of which he was standing.



“Will you kiss me now, Harry?” she said; and to her delight, saw him stretch out his arms. She sprang down three steps to jump into them, and not until she had her hands clasped tight around his neck did she perceive a change in him, too. He had looked up some old clothes left behind him when he went away, and although they were ridiculously small for him now, they were clean and neat, and he had been using brush and comb, and soap and water, with gratifying results. The child drew back and looked at him.

“You dear old *dear*!” she said, shaking him first, and then kissing him, “Now you’re fit to talk to the queen. Put me down, please, Harry. I don’t like to be carried about as if I were a baby.”

“Then maybe you don’t like me to call you baby,” said the boy. He had unconsciously felt a prompting to do this, but he did not want to offend her.

“I don’t mind your doing it,” said the child, thoughtfully, “but I should not like any one else to. I don’t mind your carrying me; but others might see it and think it looked ridiculous.”



So he put her down, and she took his hand and led him down the hall, stopping to get her little sun-bonnet, and tying it under her chin as she went out on the porch.

“Let’s take a walk,” she said, “and you can tell me about when you were a little child like me.”

So they wandered all about the place, but Harry let her do most of the talking. He was better pleased to listen. At first, she asked him some searching questions, but an instinct told her that she was giving pain, and she checked herself. Harry did not want to be questioned about either his past or his present, with those innocent penetrating eyes upon him. He began to feel an uncomfortable consciousness that his life would not bear scrutiny.

“Harry,” she said presently, in a rather mysterious voice, her little hand confidingly in his, and her sweet face upturned, “there was something I did not tell you at the fisherman’s house.”

“What was that?” said the boy.

“Why, the man came home when you were



not there, and the woman was frightened, and so was I. He talked so loud and was so cross, and used such dreadful words. Harry," she went on, sinking her voice to a whisper, "do you think he could have been *drunk*?"

She uttered the last word with an inflection of mysterious horror. For some reason, the blood flew to the boy's cheeks, and he turned his eyes away from hers, without speaking.

"Oh! I was so frightened I didn't know what to do," she went on. "After a while, he stopped scolding, and saying bad words, and threw himself down on the bench, and fell asleep and snored. And the flies came and crawled on his face, and his dog licked him, and looked so ashamed, I thought; and his face was red, and fat, and horrid to see, and a strong, bad smell came from his breath and went all over the room. And then his poor wife cried — she is young and kind, and I don't know why she married that bad old man — and she was so ashamed because I had seen him, and I went over and got in her lap and put my arms around her, and we both cried, for



we were both very unhappy; but I think she was the unhappiest, for my papa and mamma were dead, but they were gone to God, and her husband was alive, but wicked and *drunk*." She uttered the last words with that same mysterious horror.

The boy's brows were contracted, and his voice not so soft as it generally was when he spoke to her, as he said abruptly:

"What do you know about God?"

"What do I know about God?" said the child, puzzled, "why, I know all about Him."

"You do! Well, what is it, then?"

"I know He is good, and I know He loves us. The Bible says 'God is love.'"

"Is that all you know?" said the boy; "well, I know a good deal more than you do."

"You couldn't know any more than that," said the child, "for that is all."

"I know a good deal that is very different from that."

"Then it's not true," said the child, with the utmost simplicity.

"Well, don't let's talk about God," said the boy,



“let’s talk about me. Suppose I had the power to make people — to take clay and make little babies like dolls, and then make them live and be real people, and grow into men and women, and then suppose they didn’t behave themselves and were bad and disobedient, and I took them and threw them into a great ocean of fire, where they would burn and burn and never burn up, but go on burning in torture for ever and ever — would I be good?”

“No; you would be bad and wicked, and God would punish you for it.”

“How? — by throwing me into an ocean of fire, too?”

“No; but by punishing you just enough to make you see how bad you were, and get good. He couldn’t throw you into the fire, because that would be cruel, and He couldn’t be cruel, because He is love.”

“But plenty of people believe that is exactly what He does — that He has made us and put us here, without asking us whether we want to come or not, and then if we don’t behave to suit Him,



He's got the great fiery ocean already made, and with millions of men and women groaning in agony in it now, and He'll throw us in there, too, and we'll never come out forever."

"What people believe that? — bad people, wicked people!" said the child excitedly; "I know you never knew a kind, good person that was anything like God himself, who believed it."

Harry reflected. The people by whom he had been taught this doctrine were certainly not of a character to disprove the child's words, but he knew the doctrine was held by many kind and merciful people. He supposed his aunt to be one of these, though she had always been too loving and kind not to shrink from avowing such a belief. He couldn't bear to hurt the child by bringing such an accusation as he knew this would seem to her, against the old lady she had already learned to love so much. So he was silent, and, after a minute, the child went on.

"It's bad enough to tell lies at all," she said; "to tell them on people is bad enough, but to tell them on *God!*" —



She stopped expressively after the word.

Presently Harry said thoughtfully :

“ Have you ever read the Bible, Amy ? ”

“ No,” said the child, “ not much. Mamma used to find texts for me to read, when she was teaching me my lessons. I read ‘ God is love,’ and ‘ Suffer little children to come unto me, for of such is the kingdom of Heaven,’ and ‘ Like as a father pitieth his children, so the Lord pitieth them that love Him,’ and ‘ I am the good Shepherd, and ye are my sheep,’ — oh! and a great many more that are sweet and beautiful.”

“ But suppose you got the Bible now and read it for yourself, and found it told that God had made that big fiery ocean to burn people in forever, and that if you displeased Him more than He would stand, He would turn His back on you and never forgive you, and that He was stern and hard, and threw a great many more people into the fire than He took to Heaven — what would you think, then ? ”

“ I don’t believe that is in the Bible,” said the child indignantly.



“But if I got the Bible and showed it to you — all that, and a great deal more.”

“Still I wouldn't believe it. God is kind and merciful and loves everybody. He would be hurt and sorry if I believed a thing like that.”

“But you can't do just as you choose about the Bible — believing what you want to believe, and not believing what you want not to believe.”

“I can't?” said the child; “well, I'd like to know who's to prevent me! I know I've got a right to believe that God is good and loving, and that anybody or any book that tells me He is hard and cruel is telling a wicked lie. He can't be good and bad at the same time, and merciful and cruel at the same time, and I know He *is* good and not bad, and merciful and not cruel, and that's just all I want to know, and I just *love* Him.”

She paused, with her eyes full of tears. She was indignant at the libel upon the Being she loved so dearly, and hurt to think that Harry, her hero, seemed to take sides against Him. The boy was strangely moved. A new idea had got into his head. Suppose it was a mistake, after all?



Suppose the child was right? It seemed a simple thing to trust blindly, as she did, and to love still, if he could not understand. He felt a movement of his heart that prompted him to lay hold of this source of comfort, which was so much to the child. It was beautiful just to believe that God was good, and that everything that taught the contrary was to be rejected as false. He had often heard that the Bible was written in figurative language—hell might be a figure, too! He could understand how that might reasonably be. He made his way to this idea, unassisted and alone. It was a thrilling thought. He felt a sharp pang of self-reproach for fear that he had sullied the child's bright faith, or, at any rate, hurt her sacreddest feelings. He looked down and met her wistful, upturned eyes. She was about to speak.

“Harry,” she said softly, “don't *you* love God?”

He couldn't say no. He answered promptly:

“Yes,” and as he spoke, there was a feeling in his heart that made the word true.



The child's face cleared instantly.

“Think of Him just as if He was the best flesh-and-blood father that you could imagine,” said the child; “He says He is just like a father.”

“I hope He isn't much like an uncle,” said the boy, with a sudden bitterness in his laugh. This appeal to his feeling for those to whom he was bound by the nearest human ties was not a happy one. Miss Melissa was kind, but she had never really understood him, and he had never taken the most important step toward loving God — that of worthily and heartily loving one human being.

But now a new and strange feeling had begun its work in his heart.



## V.

IT was astonishing how short a time it took Amy to become domesticated in her new home, and how soon everyone felt it natural and simple and delightful to have her there. She was wonderfully little trouble, and made a brave effort to subdue, for the sake of others, the fits of sadness that would sometimes come, in spite of her.

One evening it happened that Miss Arnold was detained in the city quite late, making some final arrangements about the child. The latter, being left in Martha's care, had gone to the great leather chair in the library, which was a favorite spot of hers, notwithstanding the fact that she had been told that it was Mr. Arnold's special seat, and had curled up and gone to sleep. She had a large doll in her arms, which had been given her by one of Miss Melissa's friends. Martha seeing



that her charge was in for a good nap, had gone off somewhere, and complete stillness reigned in the room.

It was interrupted by the entrance of a small, stout old gentleman, who came in with a quick, decided tread. The lamp on the center table was turned low, but it gave sufficient light to show off, distinctly and becomingly, the picturesque figure in the big chair — his own particular, inviolate seat, as Mr. Arnold reflected, as he drew back with surprised indignation. What in thunder did it mean? He was in none too good a humor, anyway, from having been compelled, through the non-delivery of a telegram, to walk up from the station. He had already expressed himself strongly to the operator, but there was yet a certain amount of withheld displeasure to be visited on some one — perhaps his sister or the servants — and here, at least, was justifiable ground for raising a row.

He was just crossing the floor, to ring the bell furiously, when a passing glimpse of the picture made him stop and look at the child. She was so



charming, so unconscious, so deliciously comfortable, that a motive that he would never have owned, kept him from disturbing her. He had a letter to write immediately, for the evening mail, and he suddenly decided to do this before waking the child. He hoped Miss Melissa might come in and be duly impressed by the spectacle of seeing her brother crowded out of his own seat by this impertinent usurper, and waiting, with deliberation, until the outrage should be accounted for.

So he seated himself at the table, drew some paper toward him, and turned up the lamp. It occurred to him that the increased light might wake the sleeper, and he glanced across at her. He saw, however, only a clearer vision of that attractive little figure, still sleeping placidly, with her cheek against that of the big doll, and a look of serene happiness on her rosy face. He gave a low, protesting grunt as he began to write. He went on for some time, absorbed and intent, and when he had finished and addressed the letter, he glanced again toward the big chair, and encountered, from the small child lying there, the sternest,



hardest, most repellent gaze that he had probably ever received in his life. She had waked and taken in the whole situation, but she had not moved a muscle, except that a dark and angry frown had gathered on her brow. Her face still rested against the doll's, the blank inanity of whose china visage only brought out the more strongly the concentrated ire of the human face.

Mr. Arnold was disconcerted, in spite of himself, and with a much more forbearing tone than any one who knew him could have imagined his using, he said tentatively:

“Well!”

“You're a *bad — old — man*,” said the child distinctly, her whole attitude, frown included, remaining unchanged.

“Well, upon my word,” said Mr. Arnold, startled and half-resentful, “you're a great one to tell me so, in my own house, by my own fireside, and in my own chair!”

“I know it's *your* house,” exclaimed the child, starting to her feet, still clutching the doll, and facing him, erect and defiant, “I know it's *your*



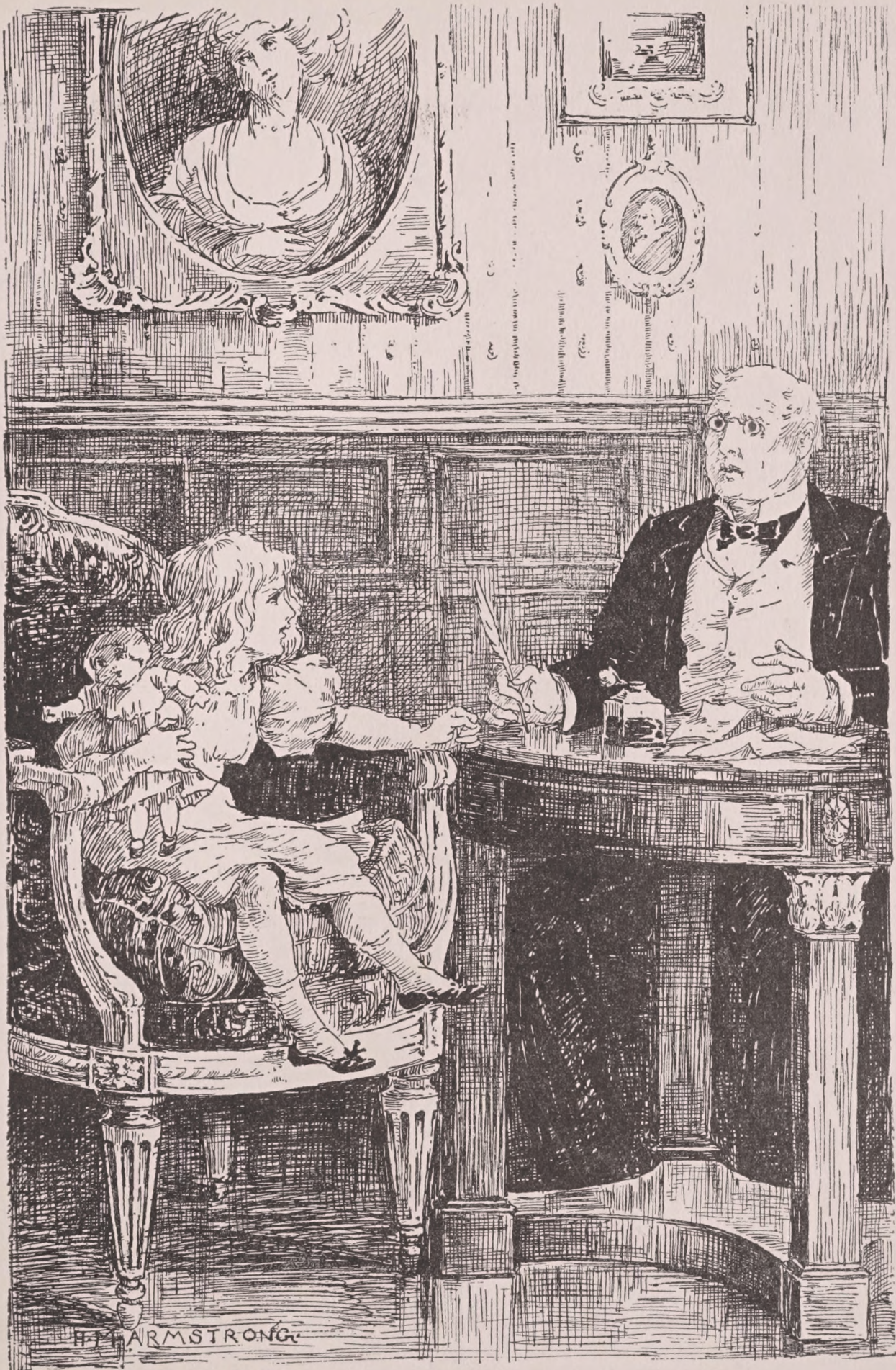
house, and *your* fireside and *your* chair, and I know exactly who *you* are, and maybe you think I'm afraid of you, but I'm not! I know what you've come home to do, and you can jess *do* it! All right. Take me, and beat me, and kick me, and push me out of the door, and down the steps, and then come back into your *own* house, and sit down in your *own* chair, at your *own* fireside, and think how kind you've treated a poor little child that's father and mother's drowned in the ocean!"

There was no weakening in her tones, no appeal for pity in her looks, as she uttered these last words. She stood before him, still frowning and defiant, with her chin thrust slightly forward, and her figure braced up strongly, as if really in expectation of a blow.

"And who told you who I was, and that I'd do all these things?" he said, involuntarily putting himself on the defensive, and actually condescending to enter into an argument with the child.

"Nobody told me," said Amy; "*God* told me," she added, dropping her voice to a low, stern tone, and hurling the name at him as if she felt he must





"YOU ARE A BAD OLD MAN!"







wince under it. "Miss Melissa said you didn't like little children, and Martha said everybody was afraid of you — so I knew you must be bad. Miss Melissa said I would have to go, when you came home, and I'm ready to go now, but I'm not afraid of you. God will keep care of me, and you can have *your* house, and *your* chair, and *your* fire-side, and I'll forgive you, too, because you're my enemy. I say in my prayers every night: 'God bless that bad old man, and make him good.'"

"Well, and how do you know He hasn't done it? Don't you expect to have your prayers answered?" said Mr. Arnold, with a sort of grim amusement, mingled with surprise. It was the first time in his life that any one had ever dared to show him his own selfishness, and he was, in truth, a good deal shocked at the picture.

"If you were good, you wouldn't hate a poor little child like me, for the Bible says 'of such are the kingdom of Heaven.'"

"H'm!" said the old man drily; "I should think *you'd* need to modify a little, to belong to that crowd."



He spoke lowly, as if to himself, thinking probably that the child would not understand; but she caught the spirit of his words and answered it promptly.

“Yes, I know I’m *bad*,” she said, as if stabbing herself with the epithet. “Sometimes, I’m jess as *bad* as I can be, but I’m nothing but a little child, and sometimes I don’t know better; but any way, I try to get good, and Mamma said I was ’proving. But you are big, and you know better, and I don’t believe you try to get good, even, or you wouldn’t be so mean to a poor little child with nobody to love her.”

“But I haven’t been mean to you,” said the old gentleman, astonished at himself, at the position he was taking. “What makes you so sure I’m going to be mean? I haven’t done anything to you.”

“But you’re going to make me go away from here.”

“How do you know I am? I have not said so.”

Amy looked at his face searchingly. The old



man bore her scrutiny with a strange and confused expression. She must have found some gleam of hope for her in it, however, for suddenly she threw her doll into a chair and flung her arms around the old man's neck.

“Oh! are you going to let me stay?” she cried delightedly. “Has God made you good so quick? Will you let me live here with you and Miss Melissa and Martha, and be so happy? — and sleep in a nice, clean bed? — and wash with the sweet soap? — and have everything so lovely and comfy? — and not go off to school anywhere? — Oh! are you? — are you? — are you?”

And she drew back, still clasping his neck, to read her answer in his eyes, which marvellous to tell, had something very like moisture in them.

Amy understood those tears and knew that she had triumphed. Her face fairly glowed with happiness as she got up on his knee, and drawing his large head down, with her soft little hands, kissed first one eye and then the other, until the dampness was all gone.

“It was just in the midst of this performance



that Miss Melissa arrived, and stood in the doorway, transfixed. The falling of the skies would not have astonished her much more. Amy caught sight of her, and running forward, took her hand and drew her into the room, telling her delightedly that she was not to go away to school at all, but was to stay here and be happy. When Miss Melissa looked into her brother's eyes, to her utter amazement, he did not contradict what the child had said.

“Who's been making me out to be a cruel ogre that devoured little children, I'd like to know,” he said, and just as Miss Melissa was framing an answer, the tea-bell rang. Then the child, with infinite tact, took a hand of each and moved toward the dining-room, and neither of the elders found anything to say.

It was almost a miracle that had been wrought, but Miss Melissa was too wise and too thankful to say very much. Great was the astonishment of the servants at the turn affairs had taken, and when, after the three were seated at table, the child bent her head and asked a blessing, this feeling



increased. It was the first time such a thing had ever been done at that table in the presence of the master of the house. He pursed up his mouth and manifested a certain amusement, but he did not forbid the practice, either then or afterwards.

When Miss Melissa went up with Amy to bed, and the child knelt as usual to say her prayers, the concluding clause was changed. Now it was, "God bless that good old man and don't let him get bad any more;" and, for the first time, Miss Melissa realized that all this while she had been tacitly admitting the application of opprobrious epithets to her respected brother. It was too late now, however, to say anything, so the fact was passed over in silence.

Miss Melissa expected every hour to be called up to answer before her dreaded judge, for the presence of Amy in the house. The first evening she simply told him that the child had been picked up after a wreck by a sailing vessel, and that no clue to her friends had been found, and so the little creature had been temporarily commended to her care. She braced herself for the rigid cross-



examination which she expected to follow, but hours passed into days and it did not come. Mr. Arnold was much away from home, and when he came back, in the evening, he accepted the child's presence without comment.

As long as this state of things continued, Miss Melissa agreed to say no more of the scheme of going off to school, and little Amy was infinitely relieved.

"If he's got good *really*," she said, "he certainly won't turn me away from his house, and maybe he'll change about Harry, too, and forgive him, and take him back."

At the suggestion of this idea, Miss Melissa found it necessary to warn the child most earnestly, never to venture to name Harry in his uncle's presence, nor to hint at the most remote connection between herself and the boy.

"If you do, Amy," she said, "remember this. The result will be that he will treat you as sternly as he has treated Harry, and he'll be angrier than ever with him. And besides this, darling," she added, "he would be furiously angry with me, and



would probably turn me away from his house, too.”

“Then I don’t think he’s got very much good yet,” said the child, “but maybe he’ll go on getting better and better, now he’s begun. But I want you to tell him one thing, Miss Melissa. Harry won’t like it at all, if you don’t. I want you to tell him that the fisherman that saved me will see that my board is paid. Will you tell him that? If you don’t, I will have to.”

Miss Melissa was compelled to promise, as she dared not risk a private interview on that subject between her brother and Amy, and so she agreed to the child’s wish, making her promise in return never to talk to him of the circumstances of her rescue.

The old lady kept her word, and with much hesitation, made the desired announcement to her dreaded brother. He received it very coldly. What was it to him?—he said. She could do as she chose about the child, and if she liked to keep her on until something turned up, she could make whatever arrangements she chose, without bothering him. Miss Melissa caught at these



words eagerly, and took them to signify a permission to give the child her food and shelter, and so she could do what her heart had so earnestly prompted, and lay by Harry's earnings for his own use on some future day, when he might need money for a more honorable and respectable start in life than the one he had already made. She resolved, however, to keep her secret to herself. Harry and Amy, she well knew, would never agree to her plan, and so she would let them believe that the boy's original intention was being literally carried out.

Miss Melissa, having now assumed definitely the care of the orphan child, it became evident to her conscientious mind that she must make a firm stand against the self-will, obstinacy and temper, of which she had already had glimpses in her little charge. She discovered from her talks with Amy that even her adored parents had had occasional combats and struggles with her, and she knew it would be impossible for her to escape the same ordeals. Still, the child already loved her, and she had, moreover, such a sense of



justice, and such a passionate desire not to disappoint Harry, that Miss Melissa felt she had strong weapons at hand for the inevitable contest.

It happened that the first serious conflict of will between Miss Melissa and Amy took place on a Sunday, when Mr. Arnold was at home. The child had been to church with "Auntie," as she called Miss Melissa, passing from that simply and naturally into the habit of saying "Uncle" to her brother. The day was very warm and the sermon had been long, and Amy was distinctly out of temper. She pretended not to hear, when Miss Melissa asked her to get her a fan, and then she threw her pretty white hat on the floor, looking askance at Miss Melissa defiantly, as if expecting and half inviting a rebuke for it. Then she sat down on the floor herself, crushing beneath her her fresh white dress, of which she was usually so careful, and using a long pin which she had picked up, to scratch the leather of the sofa, making a disagreeable noise and leaving some ugly marks.

At this, Miss Melissa, who had resolved to ignore the child's bad humor as long as possible—



(for the reason that her brother was reading his paper a short distance off, and she did not want him to be disturbed) — took the pin out of Amy's hand and told her firmly and decidedly to get up and sit on the sofa. Looking like a thundercloud, the child grudgingly got up, and flung herself sideways on the big lounge, beginning to swing her foot backwards and forwards. Seeing that Miss Melissa read her book and took no notice of her, the child's foot got to swinging farther and farther until it reached to where Miss Melissa sat, near the end of the lounge, and gave her a little kick. Then it swung slower a few times, the child scowlingly watching Miss Melissa to see what she would say. But she went on with her book and said nothing, at which the foot began to swing hard again, and this time gave the old lady quite a strong, decided kick.

Miss Melissa put down her book, moved off a little, and turned her face away so that Amy could not see it. The very poise of her head showed that her feelings were hurt, and Amy divined it. The small foot swung slower and slower, and





THE CHILD SCOWLINGLY WATCHED MISS MELISSA TO SEE WHAT SHE WOULD SAY.







finally stopped still. Then the child wrenched herself round and lay flat on her back, with her feet hanging over the curved end of the lounge.

For some moments there was silence. Mr. Arnold read his paper, absorbed. Miss Melissa had her arm on the back of her chair and her cheek resting on her hand, hiding her face. Amy made a pretence of being indifferent, and began making "the church and the steeple and all the people," with her fingers. Then she let her hands drop and fell into complete silence and stillness.

Presently she began to talk to herself. At first, she spoke very low, but afterwards with increasing distinctness.

"Don' nobody love *me*," she said — "nobody in all the whole, wide worl'. They jess *couldn't* love me — because I'm so *bad*. I reckon I'm the worse chile in all the whole worl'. I mos' *know* I am. Other little children can 'have themselves and be *good*, but I'm so *bad* nobody *can't* love me."

She paused a moment, but as the silence remained unbroken, she went on talking to herself, still in that low but distinct tone:



“All the little children at Sunday-school are good 'cept me. The teacher loves all the rest, but she don' love me. She could'n', if she wanted to, kus I'm so *bad*. Martha don' love me,” she went on, “and *Uncle* don' love me, and I *know* God don' love me, because *He hates* people that's *bad*. God *could'n'* love a *bad* chile like me. He loves the little white angels that's so *good*. Martha don' love me,” she began again, “and *Uncle* don' love me, and I *know* God don' love me — but I think it's mighty hard on a poor little chile when her own dear *Auntie* don' love her.”

She waited a moment after saying this, and then turned slightly to look up at Miss Melissa, whose averted head, however, had not moved a muscle. Seeing this, Amy continued her soliloquy:

“There ain't anybody in all the worl' that loves me,” she went on; “maybe if my papa and mamma were living — maybe *they'd* love me. They use ter love me, when they were 'live, but they did'n' know how *bad* I was. Oh! I wonder what my papa and mamma would say if they knew what I did — if they knew I was so *bad*”



that I kicked my own dear, kind, good, sweet, *darlin'* Auntie!"

The little voice was thickening up, and at the last words she burst into a wail, and turning, flung herself into Miss Melissa's arms, which opened wide to receive her.

The scene ended with earnest pleas for pardon, and ardent kisses on both sides.

Miss Melissa thought she had been the only one aware of the child's behavior, but if she could have seen through that thick newspaper she would have discovered that her brother had listened attentively to every word that had been uttered.



## VI.

As the months of summer passed, and little Amy's presence became a silently accepted fact in the household, Miss Melissa discarded, for the present, her idea of sending the child to school, and charged herself with her instruction. Amy was both bright and ambitious, and her desire to evidence a distinct improvement in her weekly letters to Harry, was a sufficient incentive to spur her on to patient effort.

The boy had told her to write to him every week, and had given her instructions how to send the letters. Miss Melissa was frightened at the idea of any complicity in a correspondence with the ostracised nephew, and so she did not take the least apparent cognizance of these letters. It was pleasing to the child's sense of dignity that her letters to Harry, and his to her, were entirely be-



tween themselves, and so she only gave Miss Melissa little scraps of information, from time to time, and was secretly delighted to find that she was not expected to do more. The letters were sent through the fisherman's wife, to whose house Harry had first taken the child, and they both felt sure of her keeping faith. The boy had impressed Amy with the necessity of keeping from his uncle all knowledge of his connection with her, and this, in addition to Miss Melissa's warning, was enough to make Amy very wary.

Harry, stimulated by the thought of having some one dependent on him, went resolutely hard to work. Every cent that he made, he hoarded carefully, treasuring it up and counting it frequently, instead of either throwing it away recklessly, or spending it on pleasures that did him no good, as had been formerly his habit. At the moment he had heard Amy express such fear and horror of a drunken man, he had made up his mind to cut short the custom of drinking with his companions, and he stuck to his resolution pluckily. He had to stand a good deal of rough



joking, and even ridicule on account of it, but his simple statement that he needed his money for a purpose for which he cared much more than for drinking beer and whiskey, had its effect, and as he would not allow himself to be treated without treating in return, he gave up drinking altogether. This course interfered to some extent with the popularity he had formerly enjoyed among his companions, but that was perhaps not to be regretted. It made it easier for him to keep away from their card-playing and other sports, which were not conducted on a basis which an honorable lad could take part in without self-reproach. It surprised Harry to discover what a strong habit of using bad language he had unconsciously grown into, for now, whenever he would utter profane or unclean words, the image of little Amy would rise before him, looking at him with reproachful, wondering eyes, and give him check. What if he should some time use such language in her actual presence? The thought of the pain it would inflict upon her made his heart beat, and he resolved, with all his might, to cure himself of this habit, too.



It was more for the sake of the child's safety and happiness than for any other reason that Harry determined not to go to the house at any time when it was possible to meet his uncle. He knew Amy would let him know if the old man went away on any of his business trips, and he waited for such an occasion before seeing her again.

The child's letters to him were a curiosity. At first, she used to write them in printed lettering, but she soon got ashamed of that, and with great pains, and much consulting of her copy-book, she acquired facility enough to enable her to express the few simple sentences which were required. But by degrees the letters grew longer. It was her ambition to have each a little longer than the last, and the amount of delight that Harry got out of these weekly communications was astonishing. Another delight was to answer them — a performance also executed with care, for since he had become aware that there was some one that looked up to him, he had an incentive to do his utmost in whatever he undertook, which had added a wonderful stimulus to his life.



He had felt it his duty, soon after the rescue of the child, to put an advertisement in a New York paper, which he hoped might reach the eye of any relatives she might have who would be interested in reclaiming her. That hope had subsequently passed into a dread, but, as the months went by and nothing came of it, he felt freer in the thought that the child was to remain his especial charge. She never put any tinge of sadness into her letters to him, and he had the joy of believing that he had done for her what would make her happy for the present and the future, too.

For the most part, the child was happy, though fits of sadness came occasionally, as well as fits of badness. Miss Melissa loved her so well, however, that she had infinite patience with both of these.

One day Amy was seated in her little rocking-chair near Miss Melissa's great one, knitting industriously on a worsted comforter which Auntie was teaching her to make for Harry, in time for the coming of cold weather. The child looked up suddenly, and said:



“Auntie, isn't it sad to think that it would make Uncle angry if he knew I loved Harry?”

Miss Melissa assented, but made no comment. Presently the child went on:

“And do you think it would make Harry angry if he knew that I loved Uncle? Because — don't you know? — *I do*. I really, truly do, Auntie, and I want to tell Harry so when I see him.”

“I think perhaps you'd better not,” said Miss Melissa dubiously.

“But, Auntie, Uncle's good. I know he's not *all* good — but then, nobody is. I know he's been cruel and unkind to Harry — but if Harry would be good and sweet to him, maybe he'd get better still. Harry thinks he's *bad* and *wicked*,” uttering these words with her usual emphasis — “but you don't, Auntie — do you?”

“No, dear — of course not. I'm sure Harry is mistaken; but I don't think we could make him see, and I fear it would only do harm if we tried to. But whatever you do, darling, never let anything make you speak to Uncle about Harry. I *know* that would ruin everything.”



“I *can't* do that,” said the child, with dignity, “because I’ve given my word. I promised Harry I wouldn’t.”

On Sunday afternoons it was Mr. Arnold’s habit to walk around the place, and enjoy a leisurely inspection of the well-kept flower and vegetable gardens, the orderly paths and grassy lawns of his prosperous home. These rambles were always solitary ones, as it never seemed to occur to him to ask Miss Melissa’s company, and she would not have ventured to intrude. It was a source of endless amazement to her to watch the temerity with which Amy would approach her awful brother, and she started in astonishment as she saw the child, one balmy Sunday, catch up her little white sun-bonnet and run down the steps after him.

“Wait, Uncle,” she said, with an amusing confidence that her society would be welcome. The next moment a tiny hand was slipped into his, and, looking down, he met the upturned gaze of a bright, confiding little face sunk in the becoming shadow of the sun-bonnet. The strings were tied



in a bow under the rosy-skinned chin, and a healthier, happier visage the old gentleman had never looked upon. A sudden feeling made him clasp the small hand close, and the pair walked off down the pleasant pathway as naturally as two friendly children. It was a sight that struck Miss Melissa dumb, as she watched it from the window.

Amy chattered away like a young magpie, causing the old man to chuckle inwardly with delight at the funniness, and occasionally the shrewdness of her remarks. She rarely spoke what could be called baby-talk, and usually pronounced her words with a distinct correctness that was remarkable in a child of her years, and when she would now or then miscall or misplace a word, she carried it off with such dignity that it would have seemed the height of rudeness to be amused.

“Why, Uncle—don’t you know,” she began now, in a very confidential tone, “there’s a boy in our Sunday-school that’s got the *chitten-pots*. It was on his face and the teacher sent him home. He looked so ugly, and I pitied him so.”



“ Because he looked ugly? ”

“ Yes — but more because he is so poor. It must be dreadful to be poor — don't you think so? ”

This inquiry, coming from this source, seemed to amuse the old gentleman, for he drew in his lip as if to conceal a smile, but did not speak. They walked on in silence for some time, Amy now and then darting away to pick a flower for a bouquet she was collecting for Miss Melissa. When they had reached a small summer-house and sat down to rest, she surprised the old gentleman by looking up from the bouquet she had been arranging, and saying suddenly, with her gravest air :

“ Uncle, how much money have you got? ”

“ Do you mean in my pocket? ” said Mr. Arnold, pulling out a handful of loose silver. “ There it is. ”

“ No — I mean in the world, ” said the child, waving her arm comprehensively.

“ Oh! I don't know exactly — a right tidy little sum, altogether. ”

“ Does that mean much or little? ”

“ Much. ”



“Well, I’m glad of it,” she said with an air of satisfaction, as she bunched her little sprigs and rounded out her bouquet. “There’s so much to do with money.”

Before he had got the better of the smile that rose to his lips at this sage speech, she surprised him still farther by looking straight at him and saying simply :

“What do you do with yours? Tell me about it.”

“I do a great many things,” he said at last, rather evasively; “I pay for the things we eat, and the fires we sit by, and the house we live in” —

“Oh! I don’t mean *that*,” said the child, as if she found all this utterly uninteresting. “Of course you pay for the things you have for yourself! But tell me about the poor people you help — and the little children, who never had anything pretty, that you get lovely things for — and the sick people you pay the doctors to cure — and all those things. Papa and Mamma used to do all that, though they did not have much money, and you have a great deal. Go on. I love to hear



about it. It's better than all the stories in the books, because it's true."

She put down the finished bouquet and sidled up to him, resting her head against his arm, and looking up into his face expectantly.

"Go on," she said again.

Poor old Uncle! A sudden sense of regret came to him. A feeling was kindled in his breast which he had never felt there before. He would have given a good big sum out of the money under discussion, if he could have thought of some story, such as was desired, to satisfy that earnest gaze and those confident, insistent tones. But he racked his brain in vain. Was it possible — the knowledge forced itself upon him with a disturbing force — that he had never in his life done one of these little acts that the child spoke of? — that he had even allowed Miss Melissa the liberty of taking money for the morsels of food and drink consumed by this little orphan? For the first time it occurred to him how monstrous it would be to accept this at the hands of poor fishermen. He had never troubled his mind to think



of it before. He felt pained and horrified to have nothing to say in answer to the child.

“I’ll tell you what I’ll do,” he said presently, seeing that he must speak; “I’ll give you all this silver to do what you please with. You can take it to the child with the chicken-pox, or do with it just what you choose. Then next Sunday afternoon, when we go to walk, you shall tell me just how you spent it, and by that time I’ll be ready to tell you some of the stories you like, too. It’s getting late now, and I think we’d better put it off.”

“Very well,” said the child, perfectly satisfied with this arrangement; “I suppose it would take too much time, now. Let’s come to the summer-house and tell stories like that every Sunday afternoon. That’ll be splendid.”

She held out her apron for the coin, and let it drop into it with a merry jingle. He felt a sudden pleasure at the sound.

“You’ll have to give me all the money to do things with, won’t you?” she said, “so you’ll do all the good. But *it* don’t matter — does it? — because I’m nothing but a little chile, and course I



can't have money unless it's given to me. When I get big and have money of my own, I'll spend that."

This seemed to settle the matter to her entire satisfaction. Her confidence in her future, her evident belief that when she was grown up money would come to her, was, under the circumstances, pathetic, and the old man felt himself strangely touched by it. As they were walking back to the house a sudden thought occurred to him which made him say:

"Ah — Amy — suppose we don't say anything to anybody at all about this plan of ours — coming to the summer-house to tell those stories, I mean? Suppose we don't tell the stories to anyone but just each other? Wouldn't that make it nicer — don't you think?"

"O, yes!" said the child delightedly, the idea of mystery catching her at once. "Not even Auntie?"

"Not even Auntie. Don't let's tell a soul. You must promise me you won't. I won't tell you the stories unless you do."



Amy gave the promise willingly, to the old man's great relief. It was strange, but he felt a sense of shame and awkwardness in the new *rôle* he proposed to play.

When he reached the house, he sought out Miss Melissa at once, and, with a sudden return to the curt and somewhat imperious manner natural to him, said:

"It is to be hoped, Melissa, that you've never carried out that ridiculous idea you mentioned, of taking board from the fishermen for this child. I won't allow any such nonsense as that. I don't choose to be treated as a pauper or a skinflint, and I distinctly forbid it. You understand?"

It was a relief to him to assert himself in this manner, after the contrasting experience of the last hour. Amy had run away to get ready for tea, and so she did not see it. As for Miss Melissa, she rejoiced inwardly at having her brother's approval of what she had been doing without it, and that manner of his she was used to. Every cent that Harry had supplied she had carefully put by for his future use, but she was



too wise to reveal the fact. She kept the secret locked in her own heart, and even Amy was still left under the impression that Harry paid for her maintenance in the house.

Miss Melissa watched with daily increasing wonder, the growing intimacy between her brother and the little waif so unexpectedly thrust upon his notice. Their interviews were always of Amy's seeking, but Miss Melissa was shrewd enough to see that her stern and self-sufficient brother, though he would not be guilty of any show of demonstration, was growing fond of the child, and was pleased at her evident taste for his society, and, more than all, at the absolute freedom and fearlessness of her attitude toward him.

During all this time Amy was generally a very good child, but the bad humors which seemed to have been born in her, were not to be suddenly rooted out, though Miss Melissa did her part in the work very conscientiously, and the child herself undoubtedly made a struggle, and was always very sorrowful and repentent after she had been naughty. Her chief trouble was her intense love



of having her own way. Sometimes she would obey Miss Melissa absolutely, and be in a sweet humor for a long time, and then a sudden turn would come, and one of her cross, rebellious fits would have possession of her. It took a great deal of patience to deal with these, but Miss Melissa had that, and, above all, she had a great love for the little fatherless and motherless child, and she knew the best service she could render her, was to teach her to give up her own will when it was wrong for her to indulge it. Miss Melissa always tried to avoid the necessity of correcting Amy when Mr. Arnold was by. It humiliated the child and it vexed the old man, though mingled with this feeling, in the mind of the latter, there was sure to be a certain amount of amusement at the little creature's comical behavior.

One afternoon poor Miss Melissa had a long and trying scene with Amy, and finding that the child was thoroughly out of temper, and only pouted and fussed and fumed at every effort that was made to please her, she resolved to stand it no longer, and ordered Amy to go into the dressing-



room and stay there until she had made up her mind to be good. Amy cried and stamped and shook herself angrily, but went. She had been too well trained to be openly disobedient, but she could manage to put as much reluctance and protest into the act of obeying as could well be imagined. She slammed the door behind her with a loud bang, and then, throwing herself on the floor, kicked noisily and screamed out, at intervals, in an angry and fretful way that was extremely trying to hear, and she rolled about and wriggled herself into the most uncomfortable heat, tangling her pretty hair all over her tearful little face.

This state of things lasted a long time. Miss Melissa was sure it was intended to provoke some comment from her, but she stood it without taking any notice. By and by the noise subsided, and after quite a long silence the dressing-room door was thrown open, and Amy appeared. She did not cross the threshold, however, but stood with her hands behind her, leaning against the jamb, and scowling at Miss Melissa like a concentrated thunder-cloud.



“Well,” said Miss Melissa quietly, “have you come to tell me you’re good now?”

“No,” said the child, setting her small teeth, and speaking in a voice of deep, low-toned defiance; “no — I’m *not* good. I’m *bad*. I’m jess as *bad* as I can *be*.”

“But you want to be good, Amy, don’t you?” Miss Melissa began.

The child interrupted her.

“No;” she said positively, “I *don’t* want to be good. I want to be *bad*. I want to be jess as *bad* as *bad* can *be*.”

She spoke through her clenched teeth, her eyes glaring, and her brows contracting, with the expression of a little fury.

“Very well; you can go back into the dressing-room till you change your mind,” said Miss Melissa. “When you stop wanting to be bad, and want to be good, you can come out, but not before.”

With a great glare of rage, the child flung herself back into the smaller room, and the door was banged to. Then the kicking and thumping and



fuming began again. This time it lasted longer than before, but as Miss Melissa gave no sign of yielding, at last the door re-opened, and in it appeared again the little dark-browed fury.

“Well,” said patient Miss Melissa, “are you good now?”

“No, I’m *bad*; and I don’t *want* to be good. I’ve tried to want to be good and I can’t. I jess want to be nothing but *bad*.”

“Then you can go back again.”

The child, still frowning, and with no relaxation of the defiance of her figure and no softening of the rebellion of her tone, said doggedly:

“Maybe if you were to wash my face and hands I might want to be good.”

Miss Melissa, concealing her surprise at this suggestion, quietly complied, feeling it quite possible that physical discomfort might be some part of the trouble. So she led the child to the washstand, sponged her face and hands in cold water, put some clean-smelling powder on, carefully brushed the shining locks, and pinned them in a knot high up on her head, and then asked encouragingly:



“Now, dear, are you good?”

The scowl had somewhat lightened, but it was not yet gone, and after waiting a moment, as if to take the moral temperature, the answer came:

“No, I’m *bad* yet — but I think I want *a little bit* to be good;” and as if to test the truth of this impression, she returned of her own accord to the dressing-room, closed the door behind her much less noisily, and remained completely silent.

Miss Melissa waited and waited. Ten minutes must have passed, when suddenly the door was thrown open, and the child skipped into the room light as a fairy, with a face like sunshine, and running up to the bewildered old lady threw her arms around her neck, and cried delightedly:

“I’m good now, Auntie. Kiss me and make friends.”

When the hugging and kissing had been ardently gone through with, Amy, with an earnestness pretty to see, said:

“Auntie, I want to tell you something. I made up my mind about it while I was in the dressing-room just now. It’s this: I’m never



going to give you any more trouble, and I'm *never* going to cry any more, as long as I live, in my life-time."

"Don't say that, darling. It is never well to make resolutions it's impossible to keep."

"But I'm *not*, Auntie. I've made up my mind. Indeed, I'm *never* going to cry, not *ever any more, at all!* Unless" — she broke off suddenly, as if struck by a thought — "unless you were to die, Auntie. 'Course I'd cry *then* — because it ain't any harm for a little girl to cry when her Auntie dies. She couldn't *help* it, then — could she?"

Miss Melissa found this utterly irresistible, and began to laugh. Amy took her laughter to mean a general re-establishment of happiness and harmony, and so the little scene ended.



## VII.

As time went on, impressions deepened, and the bond between Amy and her two old friends got stronger and stronger. So also did that between the big boy and the little girl, and so, also, alas! did the estrangement between Mr. Arnold and his nephew. It had been reported to the old man that Harry had been seen in the neighborhood, and that he had adopted a rough fisherman's life. The information had made him furiously angry, and he spoke to Miss Melissa of the boy in a manner that convinced little Amy that the mere mention of his name was dangerous, and made her feel very sad and gloomy about the future. His face, always a homely one, was cruel and hard as he commanded Miss Melissa to hold no communication with the boy, and even extorted a promise from her that she would not open any



letters he might write her. Then he called all the servants, who, as he well knew, had formerly been fond of the wayward, impulsive lad, and forbade them, also, to hold any communication with him, or to carry any letters to him or from him. Of the child who stood by, pale and speechless, he did not take count, and when, after he had gone off to the town, Miss Melissa, in abject terror, called Amy to her, she was surprised to find that the little creature's silence proceeded rather from resolution than from fear.

“Harry shall not come to this house any more,” she said, “where such cruel things are said of him. I thought Uncle had grown to be a better man, but he is *bad* and *hard* to Harry, who I *know* is *good* and *splendid*.”

“O, my dear child!” said poor Miss Melissa, “my brother is a terrible man when he is roused. You don't know. You'll have to let Harry know in some way that you can't see him any more.”

“Not see Harry any more!” exclaimed Amy, as her eyes flashed fire. “Not see my dear, good, darling Harry, that saved my life!—and that



works for me! — and supports me! — and loves me so! I'd like to see any old man alive keep me from seeing Harry. What's he got to do with me, I'd like to know? Harry pays my board, and you teach me and take all the trouble. What does he do — except, except " — here her voice changed and her lip began to tremble — "except he's been good and kind to me — and told me lovely stories in the summer-house — and I thought he was good" —

The conflict of feelings was too much for her. She broke down and began to cry, softly and restrainedly, hiding her face a few moments in her little handkerchief, and then wiping her eyes resolutely, and turning round calmly to Miss Melissa:

"I'll tell you what I've made up my mind to do, Auntie," she said. "The next time Harry comes, I will go to meet him in the woods and tell him all that Uncle has said. I think he would want to know it."

"He knows it already, child," said Miss Melissa, tearfully.

"Yes; but I want to tell him how Uncle feels about his coming to his house for any reason at



all, and I won't have Harry to come where he's not wanted."

"It *would* be better if he wouldn't come to the house at all," said Miss Melissa; "it frightens me almost to death to think his uncle might come back some time and catch him."

The child looked at her with a certain coldness. She could understand crying from sorrow, but she had no comprehension of tears that came from fright. "When I get my letters from Harry, now, I won't tell you anything about it, Auntie," she said, with dignity; "you might be afraid that Uncle would find out you had seen them."

"Maybe it would be better, darling," said the old lady, with evident relief, "but don't you think you'd better tell Harry not to write to you any more, and not to try to see you? Just think how angry with you my brother would be!"

"And do you suppose I'm afraid of his anger?" said the child, with flashing eyes; "if you think so, you're mistaken, and so is he. I stay here because Harry wants me to, and because he pays for me, and Uncle's got nothing to do



with me, and I'd like to tell him so, too. I must tell Harry about what has happened, and see what he wants me to do."

It was evident that she held herself accountable to Harry, and to no one else, and so Miss Melissa said no more.

The old man's conduct on this occasion, made a very sad impression on the child. It was the first time that she had seen the harshness and bitterness that was in him, stirred into activity, and that it was directed against her darling Harry, would probably have alienated her from him, but for the fact that he had done so much recently which acted as a partial antidote. The Sunday afternoons in the summer-house had developed wonderful things. Both of them had stories to tell, which they had made during the week, and each listened to the other with delight. Uncle's were far more beautiful than hers, the child thought, because his opportunities of finding out and helping misery were so much greater. He insisted upon the strictest secrecy, so Amy bound herself to tell no one, and so could not even give a



hint to Harry, as she would so have liked to do. Miss Melissa, also, was kept in complete ignorance of the import of these Sunday conferences, though she knew that they were Amy's special delight. Once, Uncle ordered the buggy and took her, still under the strictest pledge of secrecy, to see the little lame girl for whom he had bought a nice chair, in which she could roll herself all about, and be comfortable, while she looked at the pictures in her new books. Amy found that the child did not even know the name of her benefactor, and she admired Uncle for his lack of ostentation. She little dreamed that his new departures were so opposed to the habits of his past life, that he would have been ashamed to acknowledge them before any one but her. Still to her they had revealed the fact that this old man whom every one considered so hard and severe, had, in reality, a kind heart. No one had ever made a successful approach to it until this little child, taking goodness and pity for granted, had stimulated these dormant faculties which no one had ever shown any belief in before.



It was, therefore, all the more painful a shock to her to find his heart still so bitter to Harry — Harry who was so brave and strong and splendid, and who might have been the joy and support of the declining years of this childless old man! Amy pondered over it all a great deal, and from being at first angry and indignant toward Uncle, she grew presently more gentle and more hopeful, and made a strong resolution not to stop in her efforts to bring the two together. This desire had now become the great longing of her life, but she dared not speak of it. Her intuition told her that that would probably defeat her end.

From the day on which Amy heard the fiat concerning Harry go forth from Uncle's stern lips, the lad had not come again to the house. Through the little fisher-boy, whom Harry employed as confidential messenger, the child had written him that she wanted to see him on a matter of importance, and arranged a meeting in the wood. There, while Harry sat beside her on a great fallen tree-trunk, she had told him what his Uncle had said. She grew very indignant in the



recital, until she found that she was adding fuel to the quickly-kindled flame of Harry's wrath, and then she changed and tried to pacify and palliate.

"Harry," she said entreatingly, taking his strong, work-hardened hand in both her little soft ones, "you think Uncle is worse than he is. I can't tell you how I know it, because it's a secret, but I do know that he has a kind, good heart."

"Oh! you can't tell me anything about *him*," said the boy; "I know him through and through, at last. I used to love him when I was a little chap, and look on him as a sort of father. He was good to me, then — before I ever had any will of my own; but the moment I began to think for myself at all, and to choose to do some things he didn't do, and not to do some things he did do — he thought he'd make me into a little exact copy of himself, by flogging me. Auntie and the servants, and everyone he had around him, gave up to him so absolutely that he wouldn't stand the least opposition. He expected the same from me, but he didn't get it, and, by George, he never will! If



he'd been like a father to me, I'd have been like a son to him; but if my father, whom I never knew, was anything like him, I'm not sorry that I escaped the pleasure of his acquaintance."

"O, Harry! how can you talk so?" said the child, throwing her arms around his neck, and stopping his mouth by putting her cheek against it. Her recollection of her own parents was such a sacred ideal in her mind that it cut her to the heart to hear him speak contemptuously of his dead father.

"Well, then, I won't, Amy, if it troubles you. I'm a harsh, rough fellow, and not worthy of your love."

But this Amy could not bear. She hugged him tighter and tighter, and vowed he was the best, the bravest, the kindest, the gentlest, the dearest boy that ever lived, and the absolute conviction with which she spoke reminded Harry of her high ideal of him, and of his determination to try to live up to it.

She only saw Harry at quite long intervals, as they had to watch for chances, and the boy was



much more at sea than on land. Every time, however, he seemed taller and stronger and handsomer and braver than the last, and he was always neat and well-dressed now, although his clothes were very plain and simple, as he economized in every possible way, to save money for the child. He regularly transferred to Miss Melissa all the money he made, telling her it was to be used for whatever needs Amy might have, and insisting that she should be provided with everything that the daughter of a rich man could need. Miss Melissa allowed him to believe that he paid every expense, but she constantly assured him, what was true, that he brought more money for this purpose than there was any necessity for. "Very well," he said; "put it by, then, and let it be kept for her in the future." He had no other purpose to which to devote his earnings, and by the industry and steady habits he had now made the rule of his life, he earned a good deal. He also had opportunities, in making his cruises, to do a little business for himself, in buying commodities at one port, which he sold for a larger sum at another. There were



many ways in which he contrived to earn money, and the little store in Miss Melissa's hands grew rapidly.

Time passed, and the seasons followed each other monotonously. There were few events in Amy's quiet life, the chief variation being the occasional visits of Harry, which he now always made her in the wood. She worked away at her lessons with Miss Melissa, sometimes patient and industrious, and sometimes the reverse, but in the long run she was making great progress, and the mere hint of sending her away to school was always sufficient to revive her flagging energies. Of that she had a horror. The loss of her parents, and the breaking up of her childish home seemed to make her cling the more to the new home and friends who had taken their place. Harry was always first and foremost in her affection, but next to Harry, came Uncle. Perhaps she was unconscious of this fact herself, but it was so. Miss Melissa, with her timidity and lack of independence, was not a person to command the strong love which the child was so capable of bestowing, and



Amy loved her with a certain unconscious condescension. Her subservience to her brother, where she knew him to be in the wrong, and the cowardice of her position toward Harry, were a trial to the child. It often troubled her that she should have to conduct her intercourse with him clandestinely, but Harry had ordered it so, and she recognized his right in the matter. Besides, she looked forward to a day when all should be revealed, and when she would have the joy of avowing to Uncle her love and loyalty to the nephew he had treated so harshly, while Miss Melissa, as she well knew, dreaded nothing in the world so much as the discovery of her having even the most timid intercourse with the boy.

Amy's great hope was to implant a gentler spirit in the hearts of both uncle and nephew, and she always found her efforts successful, except when she mentioned to either of them the name of the other. Harry would invariably get angry and excited, and say the hardest things, and as for Uncle—the only time she had ventured to touch upon the subject with him, he had shown her a



degree of sternness and harshness which she had never believed possible from him to her, and he told her, in so many words, that if she ever dared to mention that name in his presence again he would have nothing further to do with her.

“Very well,” said the child; “you can keep me from talking about it, but you can’t keep me from thinking.”

The old man was amused at this dark threat, in spite of himself.

“Think just as much as you choose,” he answered, with an effort to be severe, “only keep your thinking to yourself, if you please, young lady; and I’d advise you, for your own good, to look for some more profitable subject of reflection.”

Amy saw there was need of great patience with them both. She was wholly and altogether on Harry’s side, and she would not, for the world, have had him to make overtures to the uncle who had treated him so unkindly, but she couldn’t get it out of her head that a man who had been capable of so much kind feeling toward others, should be permanently obdurate to his own flesh



and blood, especially such a young kinsman as her Harry! So she continually hoped that in time Uncle's heart would soften, and he would make the *amende* to his nephew. Her desire was to bring about a state of feeling in the boy that would make him willing to respond when the overture came.

As the months passed, Amy's silent efforts and aspirations seemed to be growing all the time more difficult of accomplishment. The breach between the uncle and nephew seemed to be fixed and decided, and the child, for all her longing, could find no place for hope and comfort concerning her dear project. Harry was never mentioned except in whispered talk between Miss Melissa and Amy. And Uncle, although he continued to have beautiful stories to tell in the summer-house of kind deeds he had done to others, seemed to have his heart shut closer than ever to his unforgiven and unrepenting nephew.



## VIII.

AT last the time came which marked the close of Amy's first year's residence with her new friends. She had come to them a few days after her sixth birthday, and now, as the date came round again, the idea occurred to Auntie to give her a party. When the subject was mentioned to Amy she was in ecstasy, but when Miss Melissa began to call the names of the children who were eligible for invitation, Amy frowned. They were the little sons and daughters of Mr. Arnold's and Miss Melissa's friends, and many of them had been to see Amy and invited her to their houses; but, strange to say, the child had never shown any pleasure in their society, and was evidently much more at ease in that of Uncle and Auntie. She could give no reason for this fact when ques-



tioned, beyond the apparently inadequate ones, that "the girls wore such bunchy dresses," and "the boys were not at all like Harry;" but she managed to convey a fine contempt for the whole collection.

"I don't like children like that," she said decidedly. "They are unpolite to their nurses, and they laugh at the way I talk, and they put too much in their mouth at once, and laugh and holler and grab at the table, and they treat me as if I wasn't a bit nicer than they are."

These views, which much amused her hearers, were the final result of a great deal of silent disapproval, which made itself felt in Amy's manner whenever any one had spoken of a child's party which she had recently attended, and from which she had come home noticeably unenthusiastic. This was now accounted for; for Amy showed her own careful training by observing with the most critical disapproval, the ill-breeding of less fortunate children.

"No; I won't have any of them at my party," she said resolutely; "I'd rather not have any party."



“But, darling, whom would you ask?” said Miss Melissa; “these are the only children we know.”

“But Uncle and I know some others — don’t we, Uncle?” said Amy, a radiant idea suddenly lighting up her face. She gave the old man a little significant nod, to indicate that he need not fear she would reveal too much. “For Uncle’s been with me to see some of the little poor children in the neighborhood,” she went on, “that I begged him to take me to see, when we would go to walk together; and what I’d like to do is to have all these boys and girls to come to my party. Oh! may I do that, Auntie? May I, Uncle?” she cried, capering about with glee. “We could have some beautiful games for them on the lawn, and give them a splendid supper, and send them all home *in carriages!* Oh! it would be just splendid; do let me!”

There was nothing mean about this young person. She always did things on a grand and expensive scale, and was not at all in the habit of counting costs or difficulties. Fortunately for her,



she had friends at hand who were willing and able to humor her.

When Uncle saw the eager face, the clasped hands, the imploring eyes turned toward him, Auntie felt, from the look on his face, that the thing was accomplished. It only remained to discuss the preliminaries, and the two entered into these at once. An intuition had taught Miss Melissa to follow the example of Amy, in never showing any surprise at the new departures of her brother, so she accepted it as a matter of course that he should interest himself ardently in the entertainment of all these little outcasts, some of whom were known to her through her labors in the Mission Sunday-school.

“I like poor children a great deal better than rich,” said Amy, “unless they are really nice children, and know how to behave like little ladies and gentlemen. But none of those at the party did. I’m sure our little children wouldn’t make fun of me just because I called biscuits *biscuits*, instead of calling them *crackers*” (with an accent of contempt), “and said the fire ought to have



some more *coals* put on it, and didn't talk squeaky, through my nose, like them."

When the day for the party came, it proved mild and pleasant, so that Amy's ardent desire to have the table set under the trees could be carried out. She directed everything, the servants showing a perfect willingness to take their orders from her.

When little Miss Amy descended the great staircase, arrayed for the birthday festivities, she was truly a winsome object to behold. She was dressed in one of her long-skirted, short-waisted white frocks, and to this she had added a cap and kerchief, modelled after an old-fashioned picture of a child which she had coaxed Auntie to imitate for her. Both were of sheer white stuff, and the cap surmounted her fluffy curls with as harmonious an effect as the frilled kerchief, which was crossed on her breast and tied behind, gave to her little body. She knew that Uncle and Auntie were watching her from the hall below as she descended, and her sweet face was shy with pleasure. She stepped down with much stately dig-



nity until, when she neared the bottom, Uncle opened his arms. Then she forgot to be stately, and jumped right into them, giving him a hearty hug. As she turned to Auntie, to bestow the same tribute upon her, she said ecstatically :

“Oh! I’m so happy. I’m so happy! Do you think Papa and Mamma can see me?”

“Yes, I’m sure they can,” said Mr. Arnold, to Miss Melissa’s intense surprise, for she had never heard him say anything like this before. Little Amy, however, was bringing out a great many new sentiments of his that were matter for astonishment, although she was unconscious of the fact. Now, as she clung about Miss Melissa’s neck, she whispered softly in her ear :

“O, Auntie, if Harry only could be here! I don’t think I could bear to have this party without him, if he wasn’t away at sea so that he *couldn’t* come!”

The shadow that had crossed her face was soon dispelled, however, by the arrival of the first batch of children. It was pretty to see Amy’s reception of them. There were twenty in all, and



she knew every one of them by name, and she ran out to meet them, and encouraged and chatted with them in a way that was a contrast to her manner with the children whom she met on more equal terms. She was now perfectly sociable and at her ease, and her tact made them all feel as she did. Some of them were ill or crippled or deformed in some way, but most of them were merely eligible through poverty. They were—with very few exceptions—clean and tidy; a fact partly due to Miss Melissa's labors to that end beforehand.

They were all taken first to the big drawing-room, where Miss Melissa played for them on the piano, while many of them listened with delight. But Amy thought this too one-sided an arrangement, and she presently proposed that Miss Melissa should play the accompaniment and let them all sing a hymn. Auntie was afraid this would give too solemn a character to the entertainment, but when she looked at the pleased faces of the children, she saw at once that Amy's intuition had been correct, and so they stood up, and when Amy,



in her sweet bird-voice began the familiar Sunday-school hymn, with its joyous, hearty melody, they all burst into singing, with faces that fairly beamed with pleasure. It was one thing to sing in Sunday-school, and quite another to lift their voices in this magnificent room, in which they were favored guests, with Miss Melissa to play for them, and Amy (whom they all looked upon as a sort of mysterious fairy princess, who could bestow any gift she chose, and was kind to everyone), to lead their singing, and encourage them with her bright words and smiles to do their best.

When the hymn was ended, Miss Melissa rose from the piano, and insisted that Amy should sing alone for the children. The old lady was very proud of her pet's really exquisite little voice, and also of the fact that she could play her own accompaniments. At first Amy objected, and looked at Miss Melissa reproachfully, but when she discovered that the children really wished it, she glanced around, saying :

“Do you really want me to? Would you really like it?”



And when every one of them said yes, in a chorus, she brought a hassock and stood upon it, and when Miss Melissa had arranged the children all around the piano, so that they might see as well as hear the *prima donna*, Amy played a little prelude of very simple chords, and began to sing. Her great piece was a cradle-song which her mother had taught her, and in which she could yet hear the subdued voices of both her young parents singing together to her, as she dropped off to sleep. This memory always made her childish tones pathetic as she sang the dearly-familiar words and tune.

So she began, low and tenderly :

“ Sleep, baby, sleep,  
Thy father is watching his sheep,  
Thy mother is shaking the dreamland tree,  
And some of the dreams may fall on thee,  
Sleep, baby, sleep.”

She spoke so distinctly that it was like listening to a pretty story, and when she came to the second verse, and sang :



“ Sleep, baby, sleep,  
The big stars are the sheep,  
The little stars are the lambs, I guess,  
And the lady-moon is the shepherdess,  
Sleep, baby, sleep.”

she looked at the children and raised her eyebrows, in smiling inquiry, as if to say: “ You didn't know *that* before — did you? ”

And they all looked as if they thought it was too wonderful and beautiful for anything in the world.

Then she sang the last verse :

“ Sleep, baby, sleep,  
Our Saviour loves His sheep,  
He is the Lamb of God on high,  
Who for our sins came down to die,  
Sleep, baby, sleep.”

Everyone was delighted, and when she finished, Uncle lifted her bodily from the hassock to his shoulder, and bore her triumphantly from the room, at the head of the procession which Miss Melissa now arranged, and marched out of the house and across the lawn to where the table had



been set. One poor child had to go on crutches, but she looked as if crutches didn't matter much to-day; and another had to be lifted. But everyone seemed anxious to be helpful, and this was easily done.

It was a beautiful, bountiful table that was set under the great trees, on the smooth lawn grass, and when the children were comfortably seated around it, Amy, who was at the head, bowed her golden curls and high cap and said her usual little blessing, with a simple reverence that everybody felt.

Then what a supper followed! — delicious bread and butter and rich country milk, and great slices of golden sponge cake, and velvety ice-cream, and all the fruit they wanted! When they had finished this, the grown people disappeared from the scene and the children were left to play. Some of them ran and romped, and swung in the hammocks and swings, and climbed the trees like monkeys, and had a free and unrestricted hour of fun, while those whom sickness and trouble had cut off from such delights as these gathered in a



circle around Amy on the grass, and she told them stories. Thrilling and wonderful they must have been, for the poor, pinched faces grew radiant with delight, and odd little chuckles of glee would interrupt the narrative now and then.

Uncle and Auntie came up through the trees, and stopped to look at this animated picture. They stood and listened until the story came to an end, and then Uncle set up a clapping that made the children jump. But when they understood what it meant, they all clapped too, until Amy ran and caught Uncle's hands and made him stop, though she looked tremendously pleased, if she did.

Then Auntie asked all the children (for hearing the noise, the others had come up) to go over to the summer-house where something was to take place that even Amy knew nothing about. Uncle wouldn't answer a word as she walked along at his side, plying him with questions. But when they got to the door of the summer-house — the very place where on so many Sunday afternoons he and Amy had talked and planned and told



stories about some of these very children — behold, there was a beautiful table all set out, and in the middle was an immense cake with seven lighted candles around it, and all along the table's edge were pretty little baskets, each one containing a nice present, and marked with the name of the child for whom it was intended. At the head was one just like the rest, marked "For Amy, from Uncle and Auntie," and in it were two little packages, one containing a lovely gold collar pin, and the other a little gold thimble, just large enough to fit her finger.

While Amy was looking at her presents the other children were examining their less splendid ones, with equal delight. Every face was beaming with joy, and as Amy reached up and put one arm around Uncle's neck and the other around Auntie's, and drew both silver heads down against her golden one in a big hug that almost choked them, there were tears of very joy in her eyes.

"All the children's presents are from you, darling," said Auntie; "they are everyone marked with their names, and then, 'From Amy.'"



“O, Auntie! I’m almost *too* happy,” said the child. “Of course I’m the happiest *one*, because I got the presents and gave them, too; and I believe the giving’s as good as the getting.”

“I believe I think it’s better,” said Uncle, looking as if he meant a great deal by the words. The fact was, giving was a new form of pleasure to Uncle, and getting was one that had somewhat palled upon him. As he looked at these happy faces, and realized how happy he had been in helping to make their pleasure, he resolved to have this joy a great deal oftener in the future.

And now the cake had to be cut, and Amy was held up by Uncle while she did it, putting a large slice into each child’s basket, and remembering of her own accord to put by a piece for each of the servants.

The evening closed with a magic-lantern exhibition in the darkened dining-room, and when that was over the children’s souls were so brimful of joy that it would have been really dangerous to try to crowd any more into them.

So they were all stowed away in comfortable



carriages, as Amy's magnificent vision had foreseen, and driven off home, as happy a set as ever was.

"O, Uncle! I kissed them every one," said Amy, when the last carriage was gone. "I loved everybody so, I couldn't help it. I shot my eyes *right tight*, and held my bref, when I kissed little Mollie Higgs. Of course I *had* to kiss her, to keep from hurting her feelings, 'cause she's a poor little child, and maybe she hasn't got any soap — but I don't *think* she was very *clean*."

She said the last words with a mysterious reluctance, that implied a full knowledge of the fact that she was accusing a fellow-creature of a dark and direful crime, and was bound in honor to mention palliating circumstances.



## IX.



MYS' voice was so clear and pretty, and her playing so correct, that it seemed to Miss Melissa that she ought to have music-lessons, but she was afraid to suggest it, lest the child's practicing should prove disturbing to her brother. One morning, however, to her great surprise the old gentleman mentioned it himself, rather rebuking her for not having done a thing so obvious. Miss Melissa found herself in the unexpected position of making excuses for her remissness, and promised meekly to correct her error at once. A teacher was accordingly engaged to come three times a week and give Amy a lesson. The child got on so well, and practiced with such enthusiasm,



that it was a pleasure to see her. One evening when Mr. Arnold was reading his paper, Amy, over in the drawing-room, began to play her little exercises and chords, and Miss Melissa, looking up half-frightened, said she would go and stop her.

“What for?” said the old man, rather gruffly.

“I was afraid she would disturb you.”

“What’s to disturb me in that? Let the child play. I’m not an ogre. I think it must be due to you that the child considered me one from the first.”

So Amy practiced unforbidden, and her playing was so well-modulated and correct that the old man would sometimes stop and listen to it as if it pleased him, and Miss Melissa at such times would seem to catch a glimpse of a different man, such as her brother had been long ago, before the making and hoarding of money had become the absorbing interest of his life.

One morning Amy had been rummaging in the big old garret—a favorite occupation of hers—and she came flying downstairs in great delight and excitement, with an old-fashioned flute in her hand.



“O, Auntie! whose is this?” she cried; “Papa used to play on the flute, and Mamma accompanied him, and I could play one little piece with him, too. Who used to play on this?”

“It has been many and many a year since anyone has touched it, darling, but your uncle knew how to play on it very sweetly, once.”

Amy said nothing, but returned to the garret with her treasure, and then began the most energetic efforts to get the flute in order. She puffed and blew into the hollow tube, and shut one eye and sighted down it for cobwebs and dust — and she got rags and oil and chalk, and polished wood and silver until it looked like quite another object from the shabby old instrument she had found. Then, with furtive caution not to be observed, she took it down into the drawing-room and hid it under some music on the piano.

At supper that evening she was very ingratiating to the old gentleman, and afterwards, she slipped her hand into his, and gently steered him for the drawing-room instead of the library, where his evening papers lay. Miss Melissa followed,



but she did not go into the room. Instead, she paused outside and peeped through the crack of the door. She saw Amy run and get the flute and give it to the surprised old man, saying eagerly :

“Look, Uncle, I found your flute up in the garret, all musty and cobwebby, and I cleaned it up for you nicely, and now you can play some duets with me. Go on — I used to play one with Papa, and I can do a great deal better now.”

She sat down to the piano and nodded her head for him to begin. He stood holding the little instrument in his hand, and looking helplessly from it to the child, and then back again. There was a sort of dazed look in his eyes, which seemed to clear away and leave behind it a stronger likeness to the brother she had loved in youth than Miss Melissa had seen for years. He raised the flute to his lips and felt for the stops with his fingers. A long hollow sound was the only result of his effort, and he dropped his arm, saying in a sort of hopeless way :

“It’s no use, child ! it’s broken.”



“ Well, if it is, it can be mended, can't it? ” said Amy promptly.

“ I don't know, ” he answered vaguely, still with that perplexed look on his face.

“ Well — I know! and it *can*. You'll have it mended to-morrow — won't you, Uncle? — and play duets with me? ”

The coaxing tone was irresistible, and Miss Melissa was scarcely surprised to hear the old man promise. Such wonders had this child already wrought in him, and so all-compelling was her spell, that even the marvel of seeing her brother go back to the music which he had not touched since a great sorrow had darkened his life, was not too much for the arts and wiles of Amy to accomplish.

The next morning Uncle actually took the flute into town with him, and when he came back in the evening he brought it mended, and in good order. Amy danced with joy, and after a good many false starts on Uncle's part, and encouragements on the child's, he succeeded in recalling the melody of “ Believe me, if all those endearing



young charms," and Amy caught the chords to it almost instantly. Miss Melissa kept out of the room, and she had too much sense to express any surprise, especially as Uncle looked ready to take her head off if she should do so.

After this, they practiced together every evening, and Uncle remembered "Edinburgh Town," and "Annie Laurie," and several other old-fashioned airs which Amy quickly learned the chords to. It is probable that the old gentleman's business acquaintances would have refused to believe their senses, had they seen the sharp old business man, who spent his days so shrewdly at work in his counting-house, passing his evenings in company with this bewitching child, who looked up at him so confidingly, and kept time to his music with her correct and simple little chords and with charming nods of her bright curly head. No one knew of it except Miss Melissa, but there was no one to whom it could be, at once, so surprising and so sweet.

Amy had a strong instinct which warned her not to tell Harry about the duets. She felt that



the boy would be all the more angry and resentful if he realized that the Uncle who had been so harsh and cruel to him could be gentle and companionable with others. Amy knew well by this time, that nothing but some deep upheaval of their natures could ever heal the breach between these two, and without being exactly conscious of her own purpose, she was, nevertheless, working hard to try to soften both these turbulent spirits, so that one day, when the touch-stone was put, the hearts of each would be in a measure prepared.

One afternoon Amy in an idle moment picked up a newspaper, and an advertisement of a concert caught her attention. She saw that some great musicians, among them a wonderful flute-player and a great violinist, were to give a performance in town that very evening, and, with her usual decidedness, she made up her mind to go. With this view, she made a very careful toilet for tea, and even went to the kitchen without consulting Miss Melissa, and told the cook to be prepared to hurry supper if Mr. Arnold should wish to have it earlier than usual.



When it was time for him to come, she put on her hat and walked down to the gate to meet him. When the coachman stopped in obedience to her sign, and she had placidly climbed in by the side of Uncle, she told him her plan and made her request with such a joyful confidence that almost before the old gentleman realized what was happening she had told the coachman to feed the horses and bring the carriage back to the door in an hour, and had flown to the kitchen to say that Mr. Arnold did want supper hurried, and had rushed upstairs and told Auntie, with much calmness and satisfaction, that she and Uncle were going in to town to the concert. Miss Melissa drew a long breath and said, "*Well!*" with a hopeless giving up of the problem, and in a short while she saw her brother and the child drive away.

Amy was in a state of delicious excitement when they got out at the great concert-hall, blazing with lights and swarming with people. They were lucky enough to find two good seats still left, and her heart simply jumped with delight as she



followed the old man down the long aisle. She looked positively bewitching in her plumed hat and picturesque little gown, and her flare of curly hair and the color in her dimpled cheeks were attractive enough to win for her much admiring comment.

Even seen from far above, this golden mass of hair caught the eye, and as the music ebbed and flowed, on violin, flute and piano, and the audience sat still and absorbed to listen, a boy in one of the cheap seats, way up in the gallery, had his attention caught by it, and sat with flushed cheeks and fixed gaze, looking at the couple down in the orchestra chairs, who had no consciousness of him. They were only listening to the music, which he no longer heard. Only confused, and it seemed to him haunting sounds came to his ears as he sat there, a rough, young workman, surrounded by others of his class, and saw this prosperous-looking, bald-headed old man and this exquisite, princess-like little child, seated among a lot of fashionable and luxurious people, and looking as if they belonged too exclusively to their class to



have any possible connection with the poor, rough, hard-worked creatures in the gallery seats. He cared nothing about the old man. He might go or stay where he chose—the farther off, in every sense, the better—but about the child he did care, madly, passionately, and his heart resented hotly her being placed beside the miserable old wretch that he hated so heartily, and seeming to belong so absolutely and naturally there, instead of near to him. This was the thought that kindled such a rage of protest within him. Amy seemed now in her proper and fitting place, and how would she seem if transferred to his environment? The thought was ridiculous. He looked about him at the rough, ill-dressed, and in many cases, dirty set in the gallery, and then at the dainty creature down below, and he almost laughed aloud in bitter scorn. What had he to do with that little princess, or fairy, or whatever was the farthest possible contrast to his own grim condition? It gave him a sort of triumph when he thought that his money, his hard-earned, carefully-hoarded money had paid for those fine and dainty clothes she



wore, and he exulted at the sight of their richness. He would have been willing to have worked nights as well as days to have paid for this, and the thought that the food which she ate also, had been paid for by him, was another source of exultation to him. What hurt and cut him, though, what took half the sweetness and satisfaction of it all away, was the evidence of friendliness and confidence between these two — the old man whom he hated and regarded as his bitterest enemy, and the child whom he had so recently adored and felt to be his greatest friend. At the present moment he did not have this feeling; a sense of distance and estrangement was upon him, and he felt a sudden anger toward the child.

Poor Harry! He had come home from his cruise — an experience of more than ordinary hardness, and labor, and privation — with the thought of Amy like a brilliant star in his heaven. It was too late when he had landed to hope to see the child this evening, so he had sent her a note appointing a meeting in the wood for next day, and having seen the notice of this concert, had determined to



spend the tedious evening of waiting in giving himself the treat of hearing some good music. The prices were high, however, and so anxious was he to keep every cent for Amy that he possibly could, that he contented himself with an admission to the gallery. He was very happy there, in anticipation of the musical treat, and his joy of meeting Amy the next day, until he caught sight of her so unexpectedly, so much sooner than he had thought, and under circumstances which made it a pain rather than a pleasure to see her.

He never thought of the music after that. He was conscious only of the pair on whom his fervent, excited gaze was fixed. In the intervals between the pieces, the child would turn her beautiful little face, with trustful affection toward the old man, who looked down at her and answered her with a kindliness which Harry, if he had ever seen it there, had long ago forgotten. He thought of that face with only anger and tyranny expressed in it, and he bitterly resented the fact that the old man could pretend to this child to be what he knew so absolutely he was



not. But what he resented more, was Amy's attitude toward his uncle, and her evident liking and friendliness toward one whom she knew to be his bitterest enemy and injurer. So angry did this idea make him that he determined not to go to see the child to-morrow, but merely to send the money he had brought. A gleam of satisfaction came to him when he thought how much it was—a sum so large that even Amy would be compelled to realize that he amounted to something, if he could earn such a sum as that. He told himself, grimly, that all the use that Amy had for him was to make money for her, so that she might live and dress like a high-bred little lady, and he decided that in future he would let this be the limit of their intercourse. He would not force his rough and common presence upon her, and it would probably be a relief to her!

These and many more resentful, moody thoughts absorbed him, giving him a sort of bitter satisfaction, and making him feel a certain luxuriousness in this ignoble sort of self-pity. When the concert ended he slipped deftly through



the crowd and went downstairs, and waited behind a pillar to see the pair go out. They came along presently, and he felt a burning pang of isolation and despised love when he saw her clinging affectionately to the old man's hand, and looking up at him while she poured forth her delight at the experience she had just had. She looked to him as beautiful as an angel of light, but in spite of this his heart hardened toward her, and he liked to think of the blow he was going to strike her to-morrow by sending her the money in a cold, hard note, and telling her he had not time to go to see her. He had still enough belief in her affection for him to realize that it would be a blow, but he felt like hurting her when he saw her friendliness with the being he so hated.

He went to sleep that night nursing and stimulating his anger in every way he could, and he waked next morning with almost as painful and angry feelings. He resolved, however, that he would go to Amy instead of sending — if only for the sake of seeing the effect of the blows which he still had it in his heart to deal her.



## CHAPTER X.

WHEN Amy came home from the concert in a state of beatific delight, Miss Melissa followed her to her room, and with the timidity and hesitation for which the child had conceived a fine scorn, put into her hands a note from Harry. Amy, true to her resolve, did not open it until she was quite alone, but when she had done so she had the joy of learning that her beloved Harry would make her a visit to-morrow in their usual meeting-place in the woods. This news capped with glory her evening of pleasure, and she went to sleep bewilderingly happy, and waked in that delicious state composed of sweet memories of the past and delightful anticipations of the future. Harry had been gone an unusually long time, and she had been ardently wishing to see him, and never had her heart reached out to him with greater love and



confidence and sympathy than now. His note — written before he had seen her at the concert — was full of the same hearty affection and joy which she felt in the anticipated meeting.

Amy's little heart was almost painfully full of happiness as she dressed herself with great care, and taking some school-books with her, so that she might show Harry what progress she had made, went off to the appointed meeting.

She was early, but she wanted to be there first, and her heart was too eager with love and longing to bear to wait at the house. She sat down on the fallen tree, with her face turned in the direction by which he would come, and waited, with a quick-beating heart. It seemed a very long time. She had no watch, but she was sure it must be long past the hour. Still he did not come, and as she sat there, wondering what kept him, she saw him coming between the distant trees. It seemed to her that he walked slowly; and, with a sudden apprehension that he might not be well, or something unfortunate might have happened to him, she sprang up and flew lightly toward him, not



stopping till her arms were clasped around his neck.

“My blessed, precious, darling boy!” she cried, kissing and clinging to him. “Are you well? What have you got to tell me? Is anything the matter?”

Suddenly she became aware that her loving greeting had not been returned — that Harry’s hands were in his pockets, and that he was looking at her coldly.

Instantly she collected herself and drew away, standing before him still and erect, with her face suddenly quiet and very pale.

“Are you ill, Harry? What is the matter?” she said.

“No, thanks; I’m quite well,” he answered in a hard, unnatural voice; “a poor working-boy like me can’t allow himself the luxury of sickness. That’s for some others,” he added, with a sort of sneer.

She had not the faintest comprehension of his meaning, but she was stung to the quick by his manner, though too proud to tell him so. It was



with a good deal of pride in her manner and tone that she said to him gently :

“ If you are not ill, what is it, Harry? Are you angry — angry with me? Have I done anything to offend you? ”

“ You! ” he said with a little laugh, “ how should you offend me? What have I got to do with you? ”

The tears sprang to her eyes, and she felt them stinging and smarting there, but she forced them back, as she answered quietly :

“ You have *all* to do with me, Harry. I owe you more respect and love than I owe to anybody. If I have done anything to you, you have a right to be angry — but I haven't, indeed I haven't; I love you too dearly! ”

Even these words of confidence and affection failed to move him. He stood a little way off, with his hands in his pockets, and a look of sullen defiance on his handsome face. He had purposely come in rougher clothes than he usually wore before Amy, and his whole dress and manner and expression made a strong contrast to the dainty



little creature facing him, with her pretty, delicate clothing, her refined, blonde beauty, and her expression of pathetic gentleness and distress.

“ You love me too dearly, do you ? ” he said, with a sort of sneer ; “ Well, I did use to think you loved me and I counted on it a good deal. I might have known if I’d stopped to think, that *I* had nothing to do with love. I thought I *had* learned that lesson, till I saw you and you made me believe I was mistaken. I know it now, though, once for all ; what has *love* got to do with a creature like me ? I wasn’t made for it and I’ve been a fool.”

Amy was bitterly hurt. Her pride, of which she had so large a share, was wounded, too, but there was something in these words of Harry’s which conquered it. To be without love, to feel one’s self cut off from love, to her the supreme good of life, seemed so pitiable and sad a thought that her heart melted with tenderness as she came closer to him, and lifting her sweet face to his, said with a rush of affectionate feeling for him :

“ O, Harry ! what dreadful words. You were



made for love, and you've got it, too, in floods and oceans full! Look at me, and tell me if you don't *know* that I love you."

She put out her little hand, and he felt a movement of surrender stir his heart, but at that moment there flashed across him the memory of last night, when her gentle looks had been turned upon his most hated enemy, and that little hand had been slipped into his. He would not touch it, but said in a yet harder tone:

"And if I do know it — what does your love amount to? Do you suppose I want anybody to love me who loves that old brute and skinflint who is my greatest enemy? Do you suppose I want the touch of your hand and the sweet looks of your eyes, when I remember how both of them were turned with *love* on him, last night? No, by thunder! I want no love that is shared by *him!*"

Then the meaning of it all flashed over Amy, and she knew she had something to deal with that would require all the tact that love could give her. She saw her way very clear before her, though, and



she felt fearless and strong. She felt that first of all, she must put herself in entire possession of the facts of the case, so she said:

“Who told you anything that happened last night?” — but almost before she could finish, he burst out:

“No one told me. I saw, myself. It would have taken the evidence of my own eyes to convince me of *that!*”

“Of what?” she said quietly.

“Of the terms of affection between that old rascal and you!” he said angrily.

“Are you sorry, then, that he is kind to me and fond of me, instead of treating me badly and hating me?”

“I’ve got nothing to do with what he does or doesn’t do. It’s you I’m thinking about. It’s a little more than I can bear to have you dividing your love between him and me.”

“Harry,” she said gently, “that is not true, and I think you know it.”

“Then you don’t love him, really?” he said eagerly, for his heart was longing to make friends



with her and to put an end to this unnatural situation. "Tell me so, and I'll believe you!"

For the first time there was love in his eyes, and she saw that he was ready to be her own dear boy again, at a word, or even a nod from her, but she could not give it.

"Harry," she said gravely, "I said it was not true that I divided my love between you and Uncle" (she saw him wince at this word), "and it is not true. I love you more, far more than all the other people in the world put together, but my heart is not so poor and little that it can love only one. I love you best, always, but I love Auntie, and I love Martha, and I love lots of little children and grown people, too, and I love" —

She hesitated a moment, and he said brusquely:

"Go on."

"Uncle," she said fearlessly, looking him in the eyes.

"You do — do you?" he answered, his face livid and his jaw set, "then I'll excuse you for the future, from the trouble of loving me."

"You are talking nonsense," she said; "you



can't make people love or not love. No one can do that, even in themselves, and it is foolish to try it with others. You can no more stop my loving you than you can stop my loving Uncle. You can no more help my loving him, just half-way, and thinking him cruel and mean and unkind in some things, than you can help my loving you with all my whole heart and thinking you the best, the noblest, the kindest, the most generous, and very dearest person in all the whole world."

She saw a little gleam of pleasure come into his eyes at these words, spoken in her ardent way, but he forced himself to remain stern and defiant. She sat down on the log where they had had so many sweet and loving talks, and motioned him to come to her side. He stood still, determined not to change a muscle of body or of features.

"Harry, do come," she said coaxingly; but he did not move.

She got up and went toward him, clasping each of his strong brown wrists with her little white hands.

"I'll *make* you!" she said, looking up at him



with a confident smile, and pulling with all her might. It was so ridiculous to see her putting her strength against his, and to feel the slightness of the hold which represented all her force, that he could not resist the temptation to humor her, and he allowed his powerful young body to give to her energetic pulling. When she got him to the log, however, the spirit of anger and rebellion within him arose once more, and he resisted her efforts to make him seat himself. He remained bolt upright, and when she begged and coaxed him to sit down he decidedly and briefly refused.

“ I’ll *make* you ! ” she said again, and jumping up on the log, that made her almost on a level with him, she put her arms around his neck and tried with all her force to pull him down. She might as well have tried to bend one of the great trees about them. He remained erect and rigid and his expression changed no more than his figure. She saw that it was useless, and suddenly her face and figure both relaxed until the little arms about his neck were soft and coaxing, and



the little face so close to his was wreathed in smiles of irresistible witchery.

“Harry,” she said in her most wheedling tones, “sit down and talk to your Baby, and be sweet, and make her happy. Please, *dear* Harry — won’t you?”

But he made a great effort and steeled his heart, as he shook his head and answered, no.

“*Please,*” she said coaxingly, and she pulled down his head with sudden force, and kissed his cheek.

“Won’t you *now?*” she said imploringly, drawing back and looking at him. But he shook his head. It was hard to resist the mingled look of love and entreaty in her eyes, and the coaxing smile on her lips, but he had inward promptings that held him up to it.

Then her whole face changed. From being the merest sprite of a child, she had one of the sudden accessions of womanliness to which she was subject, and with great dignity and gravity she unclasped her hands from his neck, and went and sat down on the most distant end of the log.



This sudden change surprised and disconcerted him. An awkward silence followed, during which Amy sat with her hands clasping her knees and her eyes fixed on the distance, her face expressing dignity, pride and calm. The boy found himself suddenly forced into the position of taking the initiative. He was resolved, however, not to weaken.

“What are you waiting for?” he said.

“To see if you have anything more to say to me.”

“Then you have nothing more to say to me?”

“No. I have told you the truth and you don't believe me.”

He felt a shock of compunction, and the great deep pity that he always felt for the orphan child whom he had rescued, suddenly sprang up within him as he saw the little figure sitting in its attitude of dignified dejection on the end of the log.

“Amy,” he said more gently, “I do believe you.”

“Then you don't love me, and I don't care about anybody's believing me if they don't love me.”



“But I do love you.”

She would not look at him, but she shook her head in serious incredulity.

“Don't *you* believe *me*?” he said.

“I don't understand,” she answered “I don't see how any one can be deliberately unkind to a person they love.”

He heard a little tremor in her voice, and he saw two large drops which she was too proud to wipe away, roll down her cheeks. His heart smote him and the defiance within him was almost gone. He remembered his grievance though, and said protestingly :

“You are unkind to me when you love and make friends with the man who is my enemy, and has done me all the harm he could, in every way.”

He expected her to explain or excuse herself, but she said nothing. He noticed the little droop in her figure and those two neglected tears on her cheek, and the sight softened him so that he came nearer, and said almost lovingly :

“Perhaps you are sorry for it now, Amy; if you are, only say so, and I will forgive you.”



But Amy neither spoke nor moved.

“Are you sorry, dear?” he said gently.

“No,” she answered, with quiet decision.

He started back, hurt and disappointed.

“You can’t love both of us,” he said; “you must choose between us.”

She looked up at him with her brows contracted into the severe frown that he knew so well, and a gleam of the old defiance in her eyes.

“You can’t make me do what I don’t want to do, and what I don’t think is right,” she said, “and you certainly can’t change my love. I love you and I can’t stop loving you, but I love Uncle—a little, too. Sometimes I love him a good deal—when he is kind—but there is one thing I always hate—and that is his being cruel and mean to you. I won’t choose whether I will love you or Uncle, because I will love you both—but I know which one I will mind and be obedient to. If you want me to come away from here and live somewhere else, I am willing. I can never be happy anywhere, if you are not pleased with me.”

These words and the look of obedient love that



went with them so rejoiced the boy, in a sense of pride and possession in her, that he came and sat down by her, taking her hand in his. At that, she put up the other little hand and turned his face full toward her, searching his eyes with a long, deep, penetrating look.

“I think I see my own boy coming back,” she said, and then she leaned for a second, and pressed her soft cheek against his. Then, holding his two browned hands in her little soft, white ones, she said:

“Harry, Uncle is better than he used to be. I know some things about him that I can't tell—but he is. He was cruel and bad and wicked to you, and I am afraid he feels so still, but is that any reason why I should not love him as much as I *can*? I can't ever love him *very* much, while he treats you so, but I think it would be very sad if you required me to be cross and ugly and unkind to Uncle, just because he has been so to you. You know and I know that I just *belong* to you, and that I'll obey you in everything that would be right—but I won't mind you when you want me



to do wrong — and that *would* be wrong. I think Uncle is really improving, and maybe he'll get better yet. Any way, I'm going to keep on loving him *some*. You won't mind that, will you, if I love you ten thousand times ten thousand more than I do him and all the world beside?"

Harry broke into a little laugh.

"If I don't like it, I'll just have to lump it, I suppose," he said, "for have your own way you will, when you've made up your mind to it! But there's one thing you've got to promise me, Baby, and it's *this*. Don't talk about him to me, for I can't bear it. Will you promise that?"

"Yes, I'll promise that," said Amy, with immense satisfaction; "now you're my own dear boy. And, Harry," she said in a lowered tone, as she sidled close up to him on the old log, "I'll tell you *this* — I *do* think *Uncle's very ugly*."

The mysterious whisper in which the damaging admission was made, and the little wry face with which Amy always accompanied her comments upon any outrage to her canons of beauty, were too much for Harry's gravity. He sprang to



his feet and caught her in his arms with a hearty laugh, and swinging her high on his shoulder held her there, looking up to her with pride and delight, while she bent her head down and whispered low to him, though there was not a soul to hear :

“ And, Harry, I just do believe that *you* — you old dear and darling ! — are the very handsomest person in the world.”

She knocked his cap off as she spoke, and covered his curls with rapturous kisses, laughing and chuckling and squeezing and kissing him, until every trace of his ugly mood was gone.

The rest of their time together was full of happy talk and planning, and they parted with the feeling that they had never so wholly belonged to each other before.



## XI.



FOUR YEARS had passed. Little Amy was grown into a tall, slight child of eleven, and was prettier than ever. She had made herself, in this long time, nearer and dearer every day to both the old people, of whose home she was now the chief pride and joy. Miss Melissa had grown accustomed to the surprises that the child's strange influence over the old man had so often given her, and she was now prepared to expect anything from that influence except the one thing which would have given Amy's heart and hers more joy than all the rest. That was a reconciliation between the uncle and nephew. Every timid attempt the child made to lead up to that forbidden subject was met with a harshness so resolute and an anger so uncompromising that she was begin-



ning to lose hope. How sad it seemed that uncle, who was so much kinder than ever before to Miss Melissa, and to the servants, and to every one else who came in contact with him, should set his heart more and more sternly against the boy he had loved so much in his early childhood! But there seemed absolutely no help for it. Amy had given up all outward efforts to make peace between them, but she never ceased trying to sow, in the hearts of each, the seed that might bear fruit some day, in some manner which she could not foresee.

As for Harry, he was become so tall and strong and handsome that the heart of his little worshipper thrilled with pride to see him. His visits were of rare occurrence now, as he no longer lived among the poor fishing-folk near by, but had made for himself a respected and responsible position in the shipping office of a great city firm. His earnings had, long ago, become too great to be committed to Miss Melissa's keeping, so he had set up a bank account of his own, which was growing satisfactorily. Every month,



however, he sent, through Amy, a sum far more than sufficient to defray the child's small expenses, and this Miss Melissa kept carefully, unknown to any one but herself.

It was still Harry's custom, on the occasion of his visits to Amy, to send her a notification beforehand, by the fisherman's boy, who had proved himself so trusty a messenger all these years, and the child would go out into the woods and hold her interview with him there, with a feeling of mystery and importance in the event most agreeable to her romantic nature. She would give great accounts of him to Miss Melissa afterwards, of how tall and strong and splendid he was—and how he examined her about her studies at her own request, and expressed himself content with her progress. She did not know that this demand, which she took great pride in making, had been all along a stimulus to study which the boy would otherwise have lacked. The little creature's belief in his superior wisdom was a thing he could not have borne to disappoint, and so he found time to do some studying, and his



natural fondness for reading gave him that resource for his idle hours. He always brought Amy a present when he came, and he soon found that books pleased her more than anything else, so he would read the stories before giving them to her, and this made him very fastidious as to the character of the books, and helped him unconsciously to set up in his mind a high standard as to his own reading. He always felt that he was going on before Amy in the books he read, and that some day she would read the same, and talk them over with him. Her influence, unconsciously to both of them, was the ruling spirit of his life, and extended over almost everything he did or wished to do.

It happened, during the autumn that followed Amy's eleventh birthday, that old Mr. Arnold began to show a closer and more absorbed attention to his business, and seemed always preoccupied and anxious. He had less leisure for the child and her talk than formerly, and he often told her to run away to Auntie, as he was very busy. He wrote and made figures a great deal



when he was at home, and he drove back to his office in the town almost every evening, and seemed much harassed about business affairs. He looked worried all the time, complained of being unable to sleep, and altogether showed himself to be in a state of mind that reacted upon both Miss Melissa and the child. They talked about it together, and Miss Melissa said she only knew that he was in some great money perplexity, but she had no doubt he would come out all right, and soon be himself again.

But things got worse, instead of better, and an anxious, hunted, half-frightened look was often in his face, which made the child's heart ache for him. She loved the old man, in spite of his harshness to Harry, which she violently resented in her heart, although she had always a hope that, somehow, that would come right with time. Now, when she saw him looking so thin and pale and troubled, she forgot everything, except that he was unhappy, and she had a great longing to help him. But she had also a delicate fear of being in-



trusive, and so she generally said nothing — only now and then she would creep up behind him, and put her little arms around his neck, and hug and kiss him tenderly.

“Uncle,” she whispered once, “I’m so sorry you are bothered.”

“It’s for your sake, most of all, darling,” the sudden answer came, as he took her, for a moment, to his heart. “Auntie and I are old folks, who won’t have need of anything very long; but you are young and must always have what is bright and beautiful about you. I want to be able to leave money enough, when I die, to take care of this. You are the only one I’ve got to work and to look forward for.”

He seemed so kind and gentle that Amy, with a bounding heart, made a sudden resolve.

“O Uncle,” she said, “you’ve got some one nearer than me. Think of your own boy, Harry, who” —

“Silence!” roared the old man, a violent anger coming into his face, as he put her from him. “I have forbidden the mention of that outcast’s



name in my presence. You have forgotten this once or twice before. Don't forget it again."

Amy shrank back, hurt and disappointed; but she was determined to show no sign of weakness, so she walked out of the room with quiet dignity, and managed not to give way to tears until she was alone.

Things went on in this way, for what seemed a very long and dreary time, and then the end came.

One evening, when she was lying on the library lounge, Uncle came home earlier than usual, and, entering the room with a slow and heavy step, unlike his ordinary brisk one, threw himself down into his seat, and, without seeing her, told Miss Melissa, in short, difficult sentences, that the crash had come, the bank had failed, and he was ruined.

Poor Miss Melissa dropped her work, grew ghastly white, and looked at him with an awe-stricken face. Her brother reached out and took her hands in his, drawing her to his side with a degree of tenderness he had never shown her



before. It so touched and overcame her, that she quite gave way, and dropping her head against his shoulder, began to cry.

“It is all, all gone,” he said; “and we can only try to help each other. The place will have to be sold, Melissa, and every cent given up to those to whom I owe it. I have not only lost money of my own, but there is something worse. I will tell you all, that one person besides myself may know what this blow is to me.”

His face got set and stern. He drew his hands away and clinched them hard, as he went on, speaking low, and as if with difficulty.

“When I saw the danger that threatened, I somehow lost my head, and did a thing I cannot now explain. I thought I could save all, and so, with that hope, I used some money that was not mine, but had somehow got inextricably mixed with mine. It belonged to a ward, for whom I held it in trust. That too is gone.”

He stopped, burying his face in his hands and trembling in his seat.

“O Brother, let me help you!” cried Miss



Melissa. "Let me do the little that I can. Sell my little place, that I have never needed, thanks to your bounty. It will be very little, but take that."

The old man did not lift his head.

"Yes," he said, "I'll take it, Melissa. It's hard to do it, but it was for that that I told you. I want to get hold of every cent I can, in order to make that deficiency good — but I fear it is hopeless. No one knows it yet but you, and I have already yielded up everything I have for the satisfaction of my own creditors. I knew you would be willing to help; but your little property would not bring half of what I need. Unless I can raise five thousand dollars, in the next two days, I am not only ruined, but disgraced."

"Five thousand dollars!" exclaimed Miss Melissa, in a tone of consternation. Where was such a sum to come from? She had thought of Harry's money, which she had been saving; but the sum required, small as it was, to the old man, accustomed to handling so much greater sums,



seemed to her immense. And, indeed, to him, in his new experience of poverty, it seemed now also formidably large.

“Never mind,” said Miss Melissa, making a great effort to be brave; “if we’ve got two days, something may be done. You might borrow it.”

“I could not ask any one to lend it to me, without explaining why I want it, and that I cannot do.”

His voice faltered, he shook his head weakly, and a broken, relaxed, exhausted look came over his face, that made him look twenty years older.

Miss Melissa put her arms around him, and begged him to believe that it would all come right. She spoke vaguely, for there was no definite hope to offer; but she felt that he must have some prospect of relief held out to him, or he could not bear it. She alluded cheerfully to the raising of the money, though her own heart sank with misgiving. As for poverty, she told him, that had no terror for her. She liked plain ways and simple doings, and she minded the loss of fortune only for his sake—for his, and—here



she glanced toward the lounge, rememberingly. Her brother's eyes followed hers, to meet the frowning, intense, deeply offended gaze of the child, who lay upon it, motionless and severe, as her manner was under strong excitement.

"I suppose you've forgotten all about *me*," she said, in a keenly wounded tone, with which mingled an inflection of indignation, to match the look in her eyes.

The old man was startled. He wondered how much the child had heard, and could only hope she had not taken in the import of the part of it which he wished to keep a secret. The other, she would be obliged to know very soon.

"No, Amy," he said gently, "we had not forgotten you. It's for your sake chiefly that Uncle is so sorry that all his money is gone. Uncle loved to think that he could always give you whatever was beautiful and comfortable and good. How could you think he had forgotten you, and the poverty he has brought upon you?"

"I'm not talking about that," said the child, springing to her feet and facing him, resentful



still, "I was a poor little child, with nothing at all belonging to me, when you let me come into this house; and you and Auntie have been good to me. I don't care anything at all about being poor, but — but" — her voice shook slightly, "you wouldn't tell me about it! You wanted Miss Melissa to know it, and both of you to be sad and sorry, and not tell me! I shouldn't think you'd treat a poor little child like that."

When they realized that it was not the loss of the money that had hurt her, but the feeling that she had been thrust out of their confidence, and refused the privilege of bearing their burden with them, even those two heavy hearts grew lighter, at this sweet proof of sympathy and devotion from the little child they so loved. Miss Melissa dried her tears to soothe and reassure her, and Uncle lifted her to his knee and kissed and held her close, saying, as if half involuntarily: —

"We haven't lost our greatest riches while this precious child is left. Have we, Melissa?"

And Miss Melissa bent to kiss her, too, and heartily answered, "No."



“Uncle,” said the child earnestly, “I don’t mind being poor, a bit, if only everybody loved everybody else,” her voice grew a little wistful at this, but she dared not say any more, so she just hugged him and kissed him and said confidently:

“God will keep care of us.”

This was one of her childish expressions which she had never had her attention called to, and had therefore retained. So stated, the proposition appeared such a reasonable one, and her confidence was so supreme, that neither of her companions could say anything to dim her faith. So Miss Melissa sent her off to get ready for tea, with a feeling in her little heart that somehow she had given comfort.

It was not her intention, however, to stop there. No, indeed! Her mind was full of a definite project, as she flew up the staircase, and ran to her little desk and wrote a few brief sentences on a slip of paper. These she enclosed in an envelope, which she took in her hand, as she went down stairs. Finding Martha, she told her she must walk to the station, which was not far



away, and give that envelope to the telegraph operator. The old woman was surprised, but she had a conviction, founded on experience, that Amy generally knew what she was about, and so she gave her word that she would strictly obey instructions.

So much accomplished, Amy went back up stairs, made herself neat and fresh as usual for tea, and spent the remainder of the evening in such loving caresses, and such confident assurances, for both her dear old friends, that, in spite of all, they caught a little of her hopefulness, and went to bed with somewhat lightened hearts.

But next morning it was a pitiful thing to see poor Uncle, so white and wan and feeble-looking, and he had to confess that he had passed a sleepless night. Miss Melissa begged him not to go into the town, but he said he was compelled to; that he must give his attention to the painful business which had to be got through with, and so he braced himself for the effort and drove sadly away. Before he left, however, Amy had heard him assure Miss Melissa, in answer to her



earnest question, that, for to-day at least, there was no possible chance that the secret he wished to keep would get out. After hearing this, Amy could kiss him good-by, with a comparatively easy heart, for this one day's grace was all that she asked.



## XII.

IT was a cold, rainy evening of early spring. Miss Melissa, in spite of brave effort, had been obliged to give up to a violent nervous headache, which the anxieties of the last few days had brought on. There was no relief for it but silence and rest, and she had shut herself into her room up-stairs. Uncle had sent a note from town, to say he could not come home to tea; that it was uncertain when he could get off from his business, and no one must wait or sit up for him. But Amy, in spite of the fact that she was all alone, had evidently no intention of going to bed. She told the man-servant to put fresh coal on the open fire, and light the lamps. When he had done this, she dismissed him for the night. Her uncle had a latch-key, and it was not necessary for any one to sit up for him. She was not



in the least a timid child, and she sat there a long time all alone, looking into the fire and listening to the dripping rain outside. After the servant had gone she had quietly walked over to the window that opened on the gravel walk, and drawn back the curtains, which had been carefully closed, so that any one approaching the house would have a full view of the room. In addition to this, she had slightly raised the window-sash, so as to hear any sound outside. Then she sat still, and looked into the fire and waited.

It was not a great while before her quick ears detected the sound of light foot-falls on the sod beneath the window, and, just as she stood up and turned, there was a tap on the glass, and a voice said :

“Amy.”

She ran to the window, and saw, to her delight, the face of her dear boy Harry, outside in the dripping rain.

“You must come in,” she said. “There is no one here but me, and I must see and talk to you.”



He nodded his head and went round toward the front door, which Amy rushed to open for him. He came in boldly, without any effort to be stealthy or quiet, and walked into the hall, where he put down his umbrella and wiped the dampness from his feet. Then he followed her into the brightly lighted library, with its comfortable leather furniture, rows of books, and bright wood fire, and there he took her in his arms and gave her a hearty hug and kiss.

“Well, baby,” he said, “what is it? Your telegram was imperious enough, but I know you don’t do things for nothing, and I’ve obeyed it.”

“Have you brought the money?” she said; “every cent you had in the world?”

“I have, indeed,” said the lad, taking a thick leather-covered packet from his breast pocket. “It took some time and trouble to turn everything I had into cash, in a few hours, but I’ve done it. I’ve only been working and saving it all for you, and if you want it, you shall have it.”

“O Harry, it isn’t for me,” she said. “Some-



thing has happened — something so sad, that will surprise you so.”

“Not for you? Then, by George, I’ll take it back! Nobody on this earth shall have this money but you. It’s yours already.”

“Then if it’s mine,” she said, “I have a use for it. How much is it? O Harry, if it’s only enough!”

“It’s four thousand and thirty dollars,” he said, not without a certain pride.

“Oh, thank God!” she cried rapturously; “it’s enough, and more than enough! Auntie has told me a great secret,” she went on; “she has been putting by, for all this time, the money you’ve been sending her for me, and that, with what you’ve got, will make more than what we want. O Harry, Harry, how happy you have made me!”

But Harry’s face, as she now looked at it, gave no response to the joy written upon hers. He looked angry and offended.

“If Aunt Melissa has done a thing like that,” he said, “if she’s deceived me, and let you stay on in this house all these years, a dependent on



*his* bounty," — he spoke in a tone of voice that expressed a furious indignation, — "why there's but one thing for me to do. I shall take the money and enclose it to *him*, her rich old brother, who'll be glad enough to get it — and then I shall take you away."

"Oh, no! No! Harry, dearest, you do not understand. Try to be pitiful and gentle to others, as you are to me. Poor old Uncle is in great trouble. It is for him that I wrote to you to bring the money."

"For *him!*" — said the boy angrily, "for *him!* You want me to hand over to him the earnings of all these years of privation and poverty, when I might have been a pauper in the poorhouse for all he cared; and I would have been a low brute of a sailor or tramp, perhaps, but for you! No, by George! this is for you, my darling — not for *him!*"

His voice broke as he uttered the little word of endearment, and Amy crept close to him, and put one arm around his neck, standing at his side.

"Harry," she said tenderly, "if you have such



a hatred of cruelty, you wouldn't be cruel yourself, would you? How do you think you would have acted in Uncle's place, if you had had money and power, and he had stood in need of help? You would have given it to him, wouldn't you?"

"I should think so!" said the boy, filled with the recollection of his wrongs.

"Even if you felt you had had real cause to be offended and angry with him?"

"Of course! Anybody'll befriend and stand by a person that always does as he's wanted to do, and gives no cause of offence. It doesn't take love and relationship to do that. The thing is to stand by a person to whom you are bound, even if they disappoint and go against you."

"Yes, that is very noble," said the child.

"I don't call it by any such high-sounding word," said Harry; "it's simply right, and that's all there is about it. Any other course is base and mean."

"So you think if your places were changed, and you could give help that Uncle needed, you



would do it," said Amy, looking at him wistfully out of her great serious eyes.

"Not now, by George!" the boy exclaimed, angry in a moment. "Not after his hard and bitter treatment of me! I could be hard and bitter too, and show him how it feels! I only wish I had the chance; but there's no such good luck for me."

"Yes," said Amy, slowly drawing away from him and seating herself in a chair near by, "if you call it good luck to know that your uncle is a ruined man; that every cent he has in the world, and more besides, has gone, in the failure of a bank; that his old home will have to be sold, and everything in it and about it; that he and his sister, in their old age, have not a penny to live on; that the name he has worked so hard to win credit and distinction for will, in future, be spoken of as that of a man who was a failure, only to be pitied, if not blamed, — then, Harry, you're in luck!"

"What!" said the boy, starting to his feet, while the color all faded from his face, "my uncle



failed! Uncle and auntie to leave their old home! Uncle's good name attacked! Good Lord, Amy! what do you mean?"

"I mean," said the child coldly, "exactly what I have said. Every word of it is true. And that is not all. He could bear that much, if it were not for something worse. He had some money in his hands that belonged to a child he was guardian for. He didn't intend to use it, and he only risked with it what he risked with his own; but he lost that too, and that is the bitterest part. If he could pay that back, before any one knows it, we should be the only sufferers, and, at least, his good name would be saved."

"How much is it?" said the boy breathlessly.

"Five thousand dollars; and Miss Melissa has nearly a thousand."

"Then here's the rest!" cried the boy exultantly, striking the packet in his hand. "O Amy, I have been a brute, a wretch, a cur—unworthy of your faith and love. Poor old Uncle!"

His voice broke; and when Amy sprang forward and threw her arms around his neck she



felt the hot tears on the cheek he pressed to hers.

“You are my own, own boy!” she said, hugging close his curly head, and kissing the bronzed wet cheeks. “I knew exactly how it would be, when once you understood. And when Uncle understands, too, it will be the same with him.”

“No,” said Harry resolutely, wiping the tears away, and speaking in a firm, collected tone; “he must never know where the money came from, Amy. You and Auntie must give me your word for that. Somehow you must get him to take it, without that knowledge. He would never accept it, if he knew it came from me.”

“O Harry, don't say that! What makes you think he would have such a feeling? You think he is harder and sterner than he is.”

“No—I know, better than you, how hard and stern he really is. He used to love me, when I was a little child and he could do with me just what he would. But he got bravely over it, and for years before we parted, even, I felt that he



hated me. I know he hates me still, and that he'd never take help from my hands."

"But, Harry, he has changed. You don't know how different he is. Auntie sees it. She speaks of it every day, and says he is a different man."

"To all but me, he may be," said the boy. "I'll venture to say no one has ever seen any sign of a change toward me. Come—I ask you."

Poor Amy dropped her eyes. She was too truthful to pretend, and any contradiction to his words would have been deliberate falsehood.

"Ah, I know very well how it is," said the boy; "much as he values his good name, I believe he'd sacrifice it, before he would get help from me to save it."

He spoke with a mixture of sadness and bitterness, and the child, feeling that she had no power to gainsay him, would not meet his eyes, which sought hers eagerly, as if in hope of contradiction.

But Amy was looking absently across the room, toward the uncurtained window, from



whence she suddenly became aware of a current of cold, damp air. She was glad of a moment's pretext for delay, in which to collect herself, and she went over to pull down the sash.

But as she got near to it, she stopped short. A face looked at her, out of the wet and darkness. It was Uncle, pale and haggard — standing very still, with his arms against the sill, as if he had been long in the same position. One instant's glance into his eyes convinced her that he had heard all. What would the effect of it be?

She smothered the cry that rose to her lips, and stepped backward, as the old man moved from his place, and sank into the darkness behind.

The child felt weak, with fear and apprehension. She fell into a seat, and turned her blanched face toward Harry, as, suddenly, footsteps were heard approaching through the hall.

“It's Uncle!” cried the boy, starting up in consternation. “Well — let him come — I'm not afraid. He can do no more than drive me out, and he's done that before.”



The old feeling of indignation, strong from long habit, had sprung up within him again and struggled confusedly with the pity in his breast. But he felt that pity, from him, would be spurned with indignation, so he straightened himself up, to receive with calmness the furious repulse he was prepared for.

The footsteps, slow and heavy, seemed strangely irregular and uncertain. Could it really be the self-reliant, brisk old man? The boy and girl stood facing the door, and waiting in breathless expectation. Yes, it was Uncle; but he was pale and weak and tottering, as he paused an instant in the doorway, and then with the cry: —

“My boy! My boy!” he reached out his shaking arms and in another second was sobbing on the lad’s strong breast.

Harry, his face aglow with love, had sprung forward as he heard that cry, and thrown his arms around him. A supreme and almost supernatural joy possessed him. For the moment that he stood in silence, supporting the old man’s



feeble form, he was in a sort of trance of rapture. All the filial aspirations of his heart, so long denied and starved, seemed suddenly, with one great rush, to be adequately satisfied. Not a word of explanation was needed. His uncle—the only father he had known—loved him again, had never ceased to love him, even through all these years of misunderstanding! They were heart-to-heart again, as he could dimly recollect that they had been in his childhood's years. It was enough.

The first consciousness outside themselves, that came to each, was of the child Amy. As they drew apart from that close embrace, both the old man and the boy turned to her, and each of them held out a hand. She came forward then softly, the light of a great happiness on her lovely face; and, as they drew her near until the three were locked together in a close embrace, each felt no words were needed. They only kissed each other and were still.



### XIII.

AFTER that reconciliation the troubles that came, serious as they were, were not unbearable. It was hard to leave the comfortable old home, and to give up luxury and plenty, and accept, instead, hardships and privation; but it was wonderful how comparatively unimportant these things seemed when taken in consideration with the love and freedom and universal goodwill and helpfulness by which each of the four now felt themselves surrounded. The old man came out of his money troubles stainless in name, though absolutely penniless; and his deep gratitude for the former condition did much to mitigate the hardships of the latter. But he was feeble and broken down, for the present at least, and almost helpless in body and mind. Miss Melissa, overwhelmed with joy as she was at seeing the brother



and nephew she loved reunited, made a great effort to be helpful; but she was at no time a person of any great capacity or energy, and so most of what was to be done fell upon the two young people.

It had been decided that the little house which belonged to Miss Melissa should now become their home; and, fortunately, it was situated far away from the scene of their past affluence, and nearer to the great city in which Harry lived. His business required him to be there constantly, but he could go to them every Sunday, and that would be joy enough. He got a few days' holiday allowed him, and he and Amy went off, with a sense of great importance, to see the place, and find out what was needed to make it habitable. The house was at present unoccupied, and the two old people agreed to the earnest wish of the young ones that they should be allowed to do the prospecting and arranging.

It was impossible to leave Uncle alone, and every one felt that Miss Melissa was the one to stay with him, in the passive capacity to which she was better adapted than the active one of



arranging and choosing and making decisions, which was the sort of thing that Harry and Amy delighted in.

As the handsome youth, now twenty years of age, accompanied by the daintily dressed child of eleven, who had the air and appearance of a little princess, approached the house that was to be their future home, both were bound to acknowledge in their hearts that it was but a poor place. The contrast to the one they were leaving was very great, and perhaps the heart of each fell within their breasts. As for Harry, anything was good enough for him; but he could not imagine this magnificent little creature, who had seemed always to belong to some higher sphere, living in such a place as this. It was a bare, unornamented, common little country house, without the least pretence to either comfort or beauty. He looked about at its barren ugliness, and then at the lovely being in the great befeathered hat, which was the style that Amy still adhered to, and his feelings found vent in a blank and dubious:—



“Well?”

“Well!” said Amy confidently, with a glance of energetic interest, “there’s a great deal to be done to it, of course, and we’ll have to go hard to work—but it seems to me that it will answer capitally.”

She had a way of using big folks’ expressions when she wanted to make an impression beyond her years, and she spoke now with all the assurance and self-reliance of a woman.

Harry drew a great breath of relief. If Amy had flinched when it came to this crucial test, he would infallibly have weakened; but now he felt himself brave enough for anything. If she was willing to make the effort to convert this place into a habitable home for Uncle and Auntie in their old age, why she should have the utmost help that ever boy could give to girl,—or man to woman, for the matter of that! So they walked about together in the most business-like way, and talked of all that must be done, without and within. Harry took out his note-book and made a list, on which Amy insisted that vines and



flower-seeds should be put, and they talked quite happily of the occasional holidays, which he said he could secure, in order to come down and help things along. His salary, which was now a very considerable one for a youth of twenty, was the sole support they had to look forward to, and they had all decided they could live on it. Fortunately there was enough of their capital left, after the five thousand dollars was made up, to make a start with. Miss Melissa owned a little quaint, old-fashioned furniture, which would be a nucleus, and a few absolute necessities could be bought, and the rest accumulated gradually. It was exactly in accordance with the feeling of all the four, that the relinquishment of his entire property which Uncle had promised should be thorough; and they were only too happy that this sacrifice secured them the satisfaction of knowing that all Uncle's accounts were fair and square, and no one in the world was injured by his failure.

Harry suffered acutely at first because of Amy, and he felt it very bitterly that he could not



save her from actual labor with her hands; but the little creature manifested an intense interest in learning to play her new part that showed her to have no dread of it, and, by her resolution and tact, she soon got him reconciled. It would only be for a little while, she would assure him; as, of course, when he got older he would make all the money he wanted. If he hadn't given Uncle so much he would be rich already, and able to have things as he chose — but which was the best use to make of it?

In such a spirit as this she completely conquered any dissatisfaction in the boy, and reconciled him to do her will in all things.

Miss Melissa, who in her early days, before her brother had made his fortune, had known what it was to work with her own hands, was able to recall a great deal of practical household knowledge, and to give lessons to Amy, who was intensely eager to learn.

The child's experiments in housework and cooking, and determination to acquire useful knowledge, were a source of much interest and



fun, especially to Uncle, whose heart seemed more and more to fold her into its protecting love.

But if his heart was so toward Amy, what was it toward Harry? The intense devotion denied expression through all these years seemed all to concentrate now in the love he gave the boy. He had abandoned forever the idea of moulding him to his own will, and perhaps had recognized at last that he was cut out on a larger plan and meant for greater things. At any rate, Harry felt the absolute bliss of freedom. He had a heart and a soul and a conscience, and he was responsible for his own development, and he felt at last that he was left at liberty to work this out according to the light that was given him. So there was now no bar between the free enjoyment of the affection between his uncle and himself, which was one of his chief sources of pleasure.

It was on a lovely day in springtime that the party of four took up its residence in the new house; and now and again as the sharp contrasts to their past life presented themselves, they would find it necessary to laugh in order to keep from



crying. But that alternative seemed somehow always a useful and feasible one; so they sat down to their first meal in the new house a merry party. The two old people felt a strong demand upon them to be brave and cheerful, because of the young ones, who needed encouragement for the hard battle of life still to be fought; and the two young ones had for their incentive to courage and hope the knowledge that the old man and woman had been bruised and wounded in the fights already made, and needed to be cheered and comforted now in their old age.

It worked effectually on both sides; and the humble place in which the lot of those four was now cast became a sanctified spot, exalted above every possibility of vulgarity or commonness by the fact that it was the daily scene of unselfish labor and love.

One new pleasure which the present had developed was an addition to their music, in the shape of Harry's violin. He had picked it up himself, and got quite a good mastery of it; and as Auntie's piano and Uncle's flute were two of the things



which had come with them out of the old life into the new, there were charming duets between the old man and the child every evening, and still more charming trios when Harry would come home. Although he played only by ear, he was so wonderfully accurate, and kept such perfect time, that he was often able to sit in judgment on the other two, who liked nothing better than to learn of him and to labor faithfully to follow his teaching.



#### XIV.

As the beautiful spring days went by, in the new home, each one of the party felt a peace and happiness unknown before. Uncle, having once surrendered, gave up utterly, and never assumed again the imperiousness and harshness which, in truth, were the result rather of acquired habit than nature. His indomitable resolve to overcome whatever opposed him had helped to make him a successful man; but what had success brought him? Looking back now on his years of prosperity, he contrasted them with this time of privation, to the infinite advantage of the latter. If there were nothing else, the one fact of his affectionate intercourse with and pride in the boy who was now once more a son to him, made the deepest happiness his life had known. Amy, too, he loved tenderly; but it seemed as if Harry was the very light of his eyes.



As for Miss Melissa, she had never outlived the simple tastes of her early life, and it soon became evident that the capacity she showed in domestic affairs,—the delicious cooking and exquisite care of the house,—brought into use her greatest talent; and in the practice of this, for the comfort and to the admiration of the rest, she found a satisfaction that nothing in her recent life had afforded.

Harry was proud and happy to bring down every Saturday his earnings for the week; and very often they included, besides his regular salary, accidental sums that his quick wit had enabled him to pick up by a little venture here and there. The expenditure of these — being over and above the regular expenses — was a thing over which he and Amy had the most delightful conferences. Something for Uncle's comfort, or something for Auntie's convenience, were generally the objects fixed upon, as Harry soon found that, in consulting them, he was giving the greatest degree of pleasure to Amy.



As for the child herself, she seemed as happy as the day was long. She was naturally brimful of energy, and the conditions of her new life gave ample scope for it. She had learned to do the prettiest sewing, in working for her dolls; and this she now turned to account for people, getting Miss Melissa's help in the more difficult parts, but showing such aptness and such resolution to learn that she was generally able to do herself what she had once seen Miss Melissa do. It was her delight to embellish and beautify Harry's little room; and he never came without finding there some addition that she had made during the week. Amy always went up with him when he arrived; and his first act would be to glance quickly round, as if in search, and when he would make the discovery he would point to it delightedly, and then clap his hands and laugh; and generally it ended in Amy's being caught up in the air and touzled and kissed as if she had been a baby. She would never have submitted to this indignity from any one but Harry, and not even from him in the presence of



the others; for she was quite a big little girl now, and liked to be treated with respect. But Harry was grown so tremendous that he could lift and toss her about almost as easily as ever, and she liked so much to feel herself held high in those strong arms, and to look down upon that curly head and into those laughing eyes, that she couldn't find it in her heart to forbid him. Besides, she had no confidence that she would be obeyed; for Harry, in spite of all his sweetness, had a masterful way with him, and considered Amy, as he had always done, his especial property and charge. It was Amy's pride to foster this feeling in him; and the bond between the big boy and the little girl, strong as it had always been, grew every day stronger and more fixed.

One thing, almost above all, Amy had lamented in giving up riches, and that was that there could be no more stories made, to be told by Uncle and herself on Sunday afternoons. Neither was there any summer-house to go and sit in. She felt this such a loss that, after one or two Sundays had passed, she made a proposition to Uncle



that she had thoroughly considered and developed before mentioning. This was that seats should be contrived under some dense shade-trees that stood at the back of the house, and there she and Uncle would invite the poorest children of the neighborhood to come and hold a Sunday-school. Uncle's face, when this proposition was made to him, was a study. He the teacher of a Sunday-school! He couldn't bear to damp the child's ardor by a flat denial, but he managed to convey to her pretty forcibly his self-distrust in such a capacity. It seemed, however, that Amy's plan was that he was merely to dignify the enterprise with his name and presence, and she would do most of the instructing, and would teach the children to sing. She had already made the acquaintance of one family not far away, where she had found the young members much in need of a little missionarying; and she felt she could put herself in an attitude of sympathy with them, and could, at any rate, make them have a pleasant hour or so once a week. It was much for that, and because the taste for helping others was now a strong



demand of her nature, that she had made this plan.

Uncle denied her nothing, so the scheme was soon put into effect. Beginning with three children, the class soon grew, additions being brought in nearly every Sunday; and Uncle, at least, was always sure of an hour's solid happiness in hearing Amy's instructions to her class. Harry, too, at his own request, was admitted, and gave needed help in the singing. Amy hadn't the least sense of false shame, and taught her class with the most absolute freedom from self-consciousness, while Uncle and Harry sat and listened. The first examination proved the pupils to be as much in need of instruction as the inhabitants of Africa could have been; and to the two elders it was new and striking the manner in which Amy did her religious teaching. She had no book but the Bible, and all the stories she told them out of that were of the love and sympathy and mercy and tenderness of the heavenly Father and his dear Son. If she had ever been taught herself anything that was contrary to this she either ignored or forgot



it; and certainly she represented God and Christ to the minds of these little children in a way that made not to love impossible.

Harry and Uncle talked about it one afternoon as they walked around the garden after Sunday-school, and the boy said simply and earnestly that the God whom Amy loved and worshipped and had presented to his consciousness was a very different being from the one with whose wrath his childish mind had been threatened. "And when I ask myself," he added, "which is likely to be the true one, the good or the bad, the kind or the cruel, it seems a simple thing to answer. I think if a missionary was ever sent by God to help a soul in darkness, Amy was sent to me, to make me know God as He is."

"And to me, too, Harry," said the old man, not without a certain hesitancy, which he soon got the better of. "I have been longer in understanding than you have, but I think I do at last. At least, I understand enough to love, where I once only dreaded."

The conversation was cut short here by their



coming suddenly upon the late Sunday-school, teacher and pupils, enjoying a treat of strawberries and cream under the trees. Harry had brought early strawberries down from the city for the purpose, to Amy's great delight. She almost always contrived a little treat or present of some sort for the children on every Sunday, so that she was able to feel that the change of circumstances had not really cut her off from the delight of giving to and doing for others.

After the children were gone, it was a great delight to walk about with Harry's hand in hers, and watch the progress that had been made by the plants in the garden, the vines about the house, and the flowers in boxes and jars, as well as in the beds, which had been planted profusely by Harry and Uncle, at Amy's earnest instigation. She was resolutely bent on making the humble little home beautiful; and already it began to have an air of refinement and taste that was charming.

It was funny to see with what adaptability Amy — the little sybarite that she was by nature



— took to the tasks and duties of her new life. The only servant they could afford to keep was a half-grown and ignorant girl; and Amy learned to make beds, sweep floors, dust furniture, and many other sorts of household work, with the greatest ease and thoroughness. This last attribute characterized all that she did, whether it was work or play; and it was perhaps the quality that stood her in best stead now. But with it all Amy never lost her daintiness. She was as particular in her personal habits as ever, even more so; for a much greater care was necessary to keep herself fresh and fair and neat, now that there was so much work to be done. She made herself big gingham aprons, that covered her from chin to heels; and sometimes Harry was tempted to think he never saw her look more charming than she did in this costume; for her instinctive taste made her fashion even this garment becomingly, and the full ruffle that fell downward from her white throat had, in connection with the shining curls that covered it behind, an air of distinction something like that in the pictures of children by Van-



dyke. The long lines of the apron, too, made her look tall and straight, and under its stiff edge her small and delicate feet showed attractively.

When work was over, she would take this apron off and hang it in its place; and then such a washing and brushing and cleaning would take place, that she was neat and fresh as a new morning-glory, just opened to the light. Then it was her delight to get her beloved books, with which Harry kept her supplied, and find a cool and shady place under the trees, and lie on the grass and read and dream for hours.

She did a great deal of castle-building at these times, and much, much wondering about her life. She was serious, and capable of looking ahead intelligently; and she often speculated as to what her future was to be. She had never quite given up the idea that, some of these days, relatives in England might make themselves known to her; but as time had passed, and no sign came, this seemed more and more improbable. Uncle and Auntie were old, and perhaps had not very much longer to live, so her whole



thought of the future was centred in Harry. She knew he would love and take care of her, as long as she lived, and that thought was her rest. He had saved her life, and made all the conditions of comfort and pleasure that had surrounded it since; and her gratitude to him was a feeling of fierce intensity, notwithstanding the fact that it never manifested itself in words. She felt that Harry understood, and she was never tired of doing for him everything there was to be done, and of racking her brain to invent things.

It was a happy, happy time to all, full of energetic work for old and young. Uncle worked the garden with the fervor and industry he had always shown in his business. Auntie canned vegetables and put up fruits for winter, until her store-room, at first so empty, became once more a thing of pride to her. Harry knew no weariness in laboring early and late to make money that should add to the comforts and pleasures of the little household; and Amy had her dainty hands as full as full could be, helping everybody, and imparting a touch of grace and beauty to the whole situation, as well



as to the house in all its details, without which it would have been barren and unbeautiful. And the secret of the zest and sweetness which each of the four found in their labors was that they were unselfish and were done for others.

By and by came the long looked for time of Harry's summer vacation. He was to be at home for a whole month, and various and enthusiastic were the plans that had been made for this time. In the first place, he had agreed to give Amy a special course of teaching. She had systematic study-hours every day with Miss Melissa; but the truth was, Amy was treading so close upon the heels of her instructress, whose education had been rather a simple one, that Miss Melissa was glad to turn her over to Harry. The lad had already begun to consider seriously the necessity of a school, or another teacher for Amy; but the mere mention of it offended the child, because of the expense, and had the effect of making her study with Miss Melissa more patiently and resolutely than ever.

But what a joy it was to study under Harry,



who made history so fascinating by his spirited reading, and arithmetic so clear by his intelligent explanation! Then their geography lessons set them to talking about other countries all over the world, of most of which Harry had heard interesting accounts from the seafaring men with whom he had been thrown, and some of which he had even visited himself, and could tell all the characteristics of. He had picked up a large stock of knowledge in his extensive travelling, and he had a most agreeable way of imparting it to his admiring little companion, who listened with avidity to every word that fell from his lips, and thought him quite the most learned and interesting person in the world, as she knew he was the best and dearest.

The self-willed and imperious nature which had been born in little Amy was infinitely more controlled than formerly; but it was not yet by any means gone, and at times it flared up in a sudden way that almost bewildered Miss Melissa. If she got into a temper, however, the slightest look from Harry would subdue her and make her



sorry and anxious to amend. The boy's influence over her was only to be equalled by her influence over him. His knowledge of Amy's high ideal of him was a tremendous incentive to him; and, although it was a difficult standard to live up to, it was a great benefit to his character to aim so high.

Sometimes they used to wonder together, Uncle and Auntie and Harry, what their life would be without the child, and it seemed almost as if it would be like the world without the sun. It terrified the boy to think he had ever put that advertisement in the paper, which might have resulted in Amy's relations coming to claim her. How different would their life be now! Nevertheless, he felt a certain satisfaction, as the result had been what it was, that he had done his duty, and he cautioned Miss Melissa to take great care of the clothes which the child had had on when rescued, as they had certain marks and initials on them, and there was a little gold pin with a coat-of-arms and a date. These relics were kept sacredly, and once in a long time Amy would ask



to see them, and would touch them with a sort of wondering reverence, as the only connecting link which she had now between her present and her dimly recollected past, which was haunted by the fondly cherished memory of a devoted father's and mother's love.

The days of each of the four were spent in good, energetic, fruitful work, and it was sweet to each to turn from these to the relaxation of music and books and talk around the bright fire. They practised with such zest and industry that they learned to play together charmingly; and one evening, when the minister of the church which they attended happened to come in, he was so struck by the music that his entrance had interrupted that he begged them to go on. His astonishment and delight were very pleasant to them all, but especially to Amy, who dearly loved praise, when she knew it was sincere. The upshot of it was that Mr. Reed, the clergyman, begged them most earnestly to lend him their services at a concert which he was getting up for the benefit of his hospital, to take place during



the Christmas holidays. Of course they all consented with willingness, and Amy was in a state of fluttered delight. She has a strong love for the dramatic, and she began at once to invent a costume for the occasion, and to review Harry's wardrobe, to see what he had that he could make a creditable appearance in.

Her own dress was a simple matter, and could easily be accomplished from the resources in hand, and Uncle had more clothes left from his days of prosperity than he knew what to do with. Harry alone—the chief supporter and worker for them all—was lacking in proper clothing to appear before an audience, and Amy set her wits to work to remedy this. She thought she would not speak of it to Uncle, for it would hurt him to think how powerless he was to help; but she took Miss Melissa into her confidence, and they each got their purses and counted out the contents on the table. Miss Melissa managed the household expenditures, and she had skilfully contrived to keep something every week out of what Harry gave her to spend, intending to use



it in some way for him, as he never spent a penny on himself. With the same object in view, Amy had hoarded every cent of the money which, from time to time, it had delighted Harry to give her, when he would have some unexpected little wind-fall. He often tossed a shining coin into her lap, and told her to buy herself some ribbons or pretty things, and Amy always took them with delight, because she loved to give him the joy of bestowing gifts of love.

Now, however, when both she and Miss Melissa had counted every cent, there was far too little to get Harry the suit of clothes which Amy had selected from the catalogue, and anything inferior to that she would not have. The concert was some weeks off, and they both resolved to go to work and make some money.

“Concert or no concert, Harry must have some nice, comfortable, becoming clothes,” said Amy. “The idea of his going shabby, when he works so hard to give us everything that heart could wish.”

Miss Melissa smiled at this expression, but





WHEN SHE AND MISS MELISSA HAD COUNTED EVERY CENT, THERE WAS FAR TOO LITTLE.







it is possible that Amy, in her appreciation of Harry's efforts and success, used it in all sincerity.

After long cogitation, Miss Melissa settled on butter as her field of labor, and Amy on nuts. The chestnuts were not yet quite gone, and there were other nuts now opening in the woods near by, and she knew that the man who kept the grocery shop in the village was buying them. It took a great many to bring even as much as the value of one of the bright coins which Harry would toss to her so lightly, but she did not mind that. She was off to her labors before it was time to begin work or studies in the morning, and she picked and hunted with great industry, and found her little pile of earnings growing slowly but surely. Another way in which she was able to help forward the precious project was to deny herself butter, so that Miss Melissa might have that much more to sell. The very day that she began this, she noticed that Miss Melissa was doing the same thing. Neither spoke of it to the other, for that would have taken away some of



the sweetness of the little self-denial which they were practising for their hero and darling.

“The only thing that troubles me,” said Amy, “is that Uncle is out of it. I think that will hurt him, for he minds being poor more than any of us. I am going to tell him, and see if he can’t do something too.”

Uncle responded eagerly. He had some winter vegetables that he thought he could sell; and when he had successfully accomplished this, he did a much more helpful thing still. He sold some of his own old clothing which he did not need, and brought quite an imposing sum, so when the resources from all quarters were counted, there proved to be quite enough for the cherished purchase; and Amy, with a great sense of importance, sent off the measures and received the suit of clothes.

What delight it was, when they were actually in the house, to hear Harry making fun of himself, and saying they would have to pass him off for an emigrant minstrel, to account for his picturesque shabbiness — and things like that!



Amy would chuckle with delight, and hug and kiss him, as if she relished the idea more than anything she had ever heard.

The concert was to take place on Christmas Eve, in the town hall of the village. It was a time of great excitement in every way; for Miss Melissa and Amy had great feats to accomplish in the housekeeping line, and everybody was absorbed in some special Christmas scheme, kept secret from everybody else.

After supper, which was unusually early, on account of the concert, Harry got up and said with an air of gravity:

“I want to take the advice of the company. I’m going to dress for the concert now, and I can’t make up my mind whether to prepare myself by using soot on my face and hands, and scissors on my clothes to make me look the picturesque thing in the Italian emigrant line,—or soap and water, and needles and thread, and take away the picturesqueness, without gaining anything. What do you say, Amy?”

“I say it’s a wicked slight to Auntie and me to



suppose that your clothes ever need any needles and thread, for you know they don't; but I don't think we can judge without seeing, so we'll all go up to your room with you, and have an inspection of your wardrobe."

Harry was a little surprised at this suggestion, but he led the way, with a great air of obsequious welcome to them. Amy, who had the keenest of eyes for everything that touched Harry, saw very plainly through this elaborate display of gayety. She knew the boy was proud, and felt ashamed of his old clothes, so worn and shabby, and that he would have long ago withdrawn from the concert but that he saw that his proposal to do so made her look so disappointed and unhappy that he resolved to go, at any cost to himself.

When they got to Harry's little room, Amy was holding on to his arm, and Auntie and Uncle were close behind. The four took up almost all the space, and they were still close at his elbow when he threw open his closet door, exclaiming:—

"Now for an inspection of his majesty's court costumes! *What!* What in thunder is this?"



“Oh, what *is* it?” said Amy, innocently. “It *looks* like a brand-new suit that would just fit you—but it *can't* be!”

Harry took down the three pieces,—coat, trousers, and waistcoat. Then he looked around him, at the three delighted faces, and saw it all! He knew that the fountain-head of this performance was Amy, and he made a dive at her; but she sprang away and flew down the hall, and down the stairs, Harry after her. He carried the new suit in his arms, and vowed he'd dress her in it, and she should wear it to the concert herself, and Amy laughed so, as she flew along, that she could hardly keep her feet; but he was laughing just as much, and was somewhat disabled too. All through the yard and around the house he followed her, until she darted in again, and flew up the steps to her own little room, where she slammed and locked the door, and fell panting against it.

“Let me in!” said Harry, panting too, as he shook the door from the outside.

“Go away!” said Amy, “go and see how handsome and fine you can make yourself look, and



then come back and I'll inspect you through the key-hole, and make up my mind whether you're fit to be opened to or not."

"I say, Amy, let me in just a moment," he pleaded.

"What do you want?"

"I want to punish you."

"For what?"

"For the outlay of riches you have made in getting me this magnificent paraphernalia."

"How do you want to punish me?" she said.

As she heard no answer she repeated the question.

"I am whispering," he said in a loud, mysterious whisper. "Put your ear to the key-hole."

Amy knelt and put her ear there, smiling, and he whispered in a very low tone:

"I want to kiss you."

She got up then, and opened the door, and he took her in his arms, together with the coat and trousers and waistcoat, which stuck out fantastically in all directions, and held her high above



him; then lowering her, he kissed her lovingly, and set her down.

“I won't ask where you got the money,” he said, smiling; “I would not offer you that insult. The fairies gave it to you, of course. I always knew you were related to them, and could get them to do what you chose.”

“No fairies about it,” said Amy; “we worked for it and made the money, Uncle and Auntie and I—all except what we have saved from what you had given us.”

Uncle and Auntie were not far off, and Harry turned to thank them too, and then went off to dress, cautioned by Amy that he would have to hurry, as they must, on no account, be late.

When her own toilet was made, and she came down-stairs, half an hour later, Harry was dressed and waiting for her. He stood by the dining-room table, under the light, reading the evening paper; and his splendid figure and handsome face were so admirably set off by the well-fitting suit of dark clothes that Amy looked at him with a heart that throbbed with pride.



She came upon him so quietly that he did not hear her until she said:

“Well, I’ve never seen a prince, Harry, but I imagine you look exactly like one now.”

“You’ve never seen a prince!” he said, flushing with pleasure and pride, as he turned his eyes on her. “What a shame! I’ve seen a princess!” and before she knew what he was about he lifted her bodily and stood her on the table, in front of him.

“Now, princess, you are on your throne,” he said. “May your humblest subject kiss your hand?”

As he took it lightly into his, she threw both arms around his neck, and hugged and kissed him.

She was beautiful, indeed, as one’s ideal of a little princess, in her fresh white frock, with big puffed sleeves, and a scoop at the throat that showed her fair flesh becomingly. Her maze of golden locks was carefully brushed, and shone with a brilliant lustre. Her childish face was flushed with health and happiness, and on her



shoulders and sleeves and about her waist was a flutter of rose-colored ribbons, which had been one of Harry's last presents to her.

She had such a really royal air about her that it was no wonder that it occurred to Harry to fall on one knee and put the other for her to step on in her descent from the table. When he did this she was too pleased with the romance of it to decline; but after she had made use of the knee she brushed off the dust with her handkerchief, that nothing might blemish the immaculate trousers.



## XV.

THE neighborhood in which Amy and her friends were now settled was one of those suburbs of a great city where many rich and fashionable people made their homes for a part of the year; and as many of these were interested in the prosperity of this church-work, there was a fine audience assembled in the town-hall to hear the concert. Amy had made the acquaintance of some of these people, at Sunday-school, and had even received certain friendly overtures from these children and their parents; but she had been quick to recognize the fact that the invitations which they gave her never included or had any reference to the other members of the household, and so she had invariably declined them, without even consulting her elders. She felt, too, that she was on a different footing, in this congregation, from the one



she had had in former days; and to have Uncle and Auntie and Harry and herself looked upon as poor people, to be condescended to, was what it was not in Amy's nature to relish, and although she could not prevent an outward recognition of their changed condition, she certainly had no notion of being patronized by any one.

When they got to the hall they found that their performance, a trio, in which she of course played the piano, Harry the violin, and Uncle the flute, was the third piece on the programme. They were cordially welcomed, by the clergyman, who, however, was too busy to attend to them much, and the three remained together, a little apart from the chattering crowd in the dressing-rooms, and waited for their turn to come. Some ladies whom Amy had met at church and Sunday-school spoke to them kindly; but the child had a sense of being looked at, with vulgar curiosity, which was very distasteful to her, and she had on, more than ordinarily, her stately and self-possessed little air.

The first performance was a loud chorus sung by a great many voices which had not been trained



to any special correctness of tune or time, and Amy, in her heart, felt it to be rather contemptible. The second was a recitation by a very self-confident girl, who had carried off the elocution prize, in the village school, and considered herself quite ready for success on the dramatic stage. Amy peeped through the scenes, and saw and heard her, and with concise decision made up her mind that it was an exhibition of very false feeling and very bad taste. The girl rolled her eyes and rolled her r's, and clasped her hands and smote her chest, in a way that made Amy feel ashamed that such a thing should be palmed off on an audience, as good and intelligent recitation. Altogether the entertainment was so little to her taste that she felt sorry she had part or lot in it, until she remembered what its object was, and that fortified her.

She was feeling, however, very dignified and stately as she walked out on the stage, following Harry, in whose manly and attractive appearance she felt a conscious pride. Uncle, who was the only agitated member of the party, was close at



her side, and, more with a feeling of giving than of gaining protection, she slipped her hand into his.

Never had the child looked more charming. Her hair had relaxed a little from the discipline of her firm brushing, and stood out around her head like an aureole of light. Her eyes sparkled, her cheeks glowed, until they matched her pink ribbons; and her straight, slight figure, in its pretty little quaint white gown, was ideally picturesque and attractive. Dear old Uncle, who was not handsome at best, looked very stiff and serious, and somehow made the strongest possible foil for her youthful charm and unconsciousness.

The effect produced upon the audience was instantaneous. A sudden and complete hush fell upon the chattering assembly at this strange and unexpected sight. Amy made the briefest of little bows as she walked to the piano and took her seat on the stool. She was evidently looked up to as director, for both Uncle and Harry obeyed promptly the little nods she gave them. It was astonishing with what clearness and de-



cision she struck the sounding chord with which the piece began; and then all three instruments in admirable time and tune joined in a charming melody, that flowed on with uninterrupted finish and correctness to the end.

The audience was absolutely astonished. There were many present who could appreciate the rarity and attractiveness of a performance like this; and as Amy rose, and the two men lowered their instruments, a storm of applause burst forth. The child, with only the same brief bow which she had given before, put her hand in Uncle's again, and walked quickly and quietly off the stage, Harry coming behind with a heart that thumped hard with pride and delight in her.

But the applause did not cease. It would sink a little, and then rise again with more vigor and enthusiasm; and Mr. Reed, in great delight, begged them to respond to the *encore*. Amy asked earnestly to be excused, however, and compromised on going back to bow her acknowledgments. She went out with one hand in Uncle's



and the other in Harry's; but she didn't go far, and the audience, who were simply bewitched by her, got only a tantalizing peep, and the merest glimpse of a charming smile, before she disappeared again. They continued to clap and call; but Amy noticed that Uncle looked a little flushed and tired, and she begged Mr. Reed to let the next performance go on. There was so little enthusiasm for this, however, that Mr. Reed came, with an air of real beseeching, to Amy to beg her to consent to appear again. He did not think of consulting Uncle or Harry, as he saw they both referred the whole thing to the child. Amy decided that Uncle was too tired to do more; and the relief on the old man's face showed that her decision was wise. She added, however, that she and Harry could play a duet if Mr. Reed would let it come in at the close of the first part, so that they might take no one else's place. This was agreed to; and when, at last, they came out again, the manager having announced that they had consented to do so by special request, the audience were carried away with approval and



delight. It was impossible for any one so susceptible and emotional as Amy not to feel the magnetic current from them to her, and Harry caught it too. They played a very spirited, gay, exciting air, getting faster and faster toward the climax, Harry's violin keeping up an even race with Amy's piano notes; and when it ended, not only they, but the audience, had a sort of breathless feeling; and at the last loud, quick, staccato notes, when Amy jumped up from the piano, and Harry lowered his violin, with a deep-drawn breath, they were both smiling with the emotion and pleasure of the music, and the audience were almost ready to worship them. Amy had done her part, however, and she flitted away, and went back to the dressing-room, determined to ignore the applause which followed her. Her sensitive consciousness had taken in the fact that her own and Harry's triumph had not been altogether pleasing to some of those behind the scenes, and she wished now to efface herself, and not to stand in the way of others who had some claim to recognition too.



As their part in the performance was now over, she hurriedly proposed to Uncle and Harry that they should all go down and sit in the audience, and be spectators of what followed. So they quickly slipped away, and Amy put on her hat and cape on the stairs, and they went around to the entrance, and found there were still a few seats left in the back of the hall; and in another moment they had quietly taken possession of three of these without being noticed. They found the audience engaged in vociferous clapping and whistling and calling; but it really did not occur to them what it was about, until the manager came out and said that, with the best will in the world to oblige them, he could not do so, as the performers for whom they were calling had disappeared, and he could not find them! Then Amy blushed and looked at Harry, who grinned and gave her a surreptitious pinch, and Uncle uttered a quiet chuckle, which Amy suppressed by a frown; and the three sat there, very still and quiet, but enjoying in their little way the delights of a popular ovation. They were very attentive listeners to what followed; but



both Amy and Harry laid up a good deal of material for private fun.

Even before the performance ended a few people near by had recognized them, and had pointed them out to others; and as they were going down the steps on their way out, a man whom Amy recognized as the organist of the church ran and overtook them, and told the child that Mrs. Herbert wanted to speak to her. Even Amy knew who Mrs. Herbert was — the great lady of the neighborhood, whose magnificent house, costumes, and equipages were the admiration of the country. Amy had often seen her, and had somehow not been prepossessed by her or by her children, who condescended to attend the Sunday-school with a retinue of nurses and governesses who got very much in the way and gave a great deal of trouble. When, therefore, she received Mrs. Herbert's summons, she did not show the alacrity which Mrs. Herbert's delighted messenger evidently expected.

“Come,” he said rather urgently, “I will take you to her.”



“Thank you,” said Amy quietly, “I will wait here to see what she wants,” and she drew a little to one side with Uncle and Harry, so as not to be in the way of others going out. The man looked astonished.

“I think you had better go back to where she is. She sent me to bring you,” he said.

“Thank you,” said Amy coolly, “I’d rather wait here.”

The man went back and told Mrs. Herbert that the child said she would wait for her at the foot of the stairs. The great lady seemed not quite to comprehend. She thought there had perhaps been some mistake, and she presently went off with some friends, and made her way slowly down the steps, where Amy stood between Uncle and Harry. Drawn up to the pavement was Mrs. Herbert’s luxurious landau, which a footman held open. Amy stood perfectly still and waited, making no motion to advance. The great lady looked at her and held out her hand, which Amy took just a moment and then dropped.

“I wanted to tell you how charmingly you play,



child," said Mrs. Herbert, quite ignoring Uncle and Harry, as Amy was quick to see, "and to tell you you must come up to-morrow and have your Christmas dinner at the Manor, and I'll find some little presents for you."

"Thank you," said Amy with perfect politeness, "but I would not like to take my Christmas dinner away from home."

"Oh, really, a very proper feeling!" said Mrs. Herbert. "No doubt you are quite right; but you must come up during the holidays, and see my children, and I won't forget the presents."

"Thank you," said Amy again; "but as we have no carriage, and the weather is bad, it would be better for your children to come to see me."

Mrs. Herbert looked, for once, quite discomposed; and before she had collected herself to reply, Amy had bowed and said good-evening with the greatest politeness, and walked away with Uncle on one side and Harry on the other.

"Good for you, Baby!" said Harry; "served



her right for her impudence! Wants to get you up there to show you off to her Christmas guests! I know that's it; but she missed it, didn't she?"

"I think so," said Amy with dignity; "the idea of inviting me anywhere without my own family, and thinking I would go—and to think *any one* could get me away from home on Christmas Day!"

This little episode left an unpleasant effect on her, though she knew she came out of it well. There was a consciousness in the child of equality with the very highest in breeding and position, which caused her to be a good deal put out by this attempt at patronage. She saw that Uncle and Auntie, and even Harry, could accept a humble position in life far better than she could, and she felt there was an inborn and ineradicable reason for it. She had a feeling of being born to the purple which never left her, no matter in what lowly way she might employ herself, and her interview with Mrs. Herbert had made this feeling stronger within her than ever.

By the time she reached home, however, and



received the delighted congratulations of Miss Melissa, who had gone to the concert with a neighbor, the discord of this episode had passed away, and she was full of sweet joy in the present and bright anticipations of the morrow.



## XVI.

WHEN Christmas morning dawned, there was not one of the little household who did not feel buoyantly, ardently, gratefully happy, though the contrast with other Christmases, so far as worldly belongings went, was very great. They all rose early, and met around the big wood fire in the sitting-room, to give and receive their presents. Each of them had three to give, and three to receive, and the cleverest surprises had been planned. As for Harry's gifts, they were so splendid that Uncle and Auntie both rebuked him for extravagance; but he said, "Why shouldn't I? I can afford it;" and Amy said, "Listen to that swagger, will you! Let him alone. I love it! He's got something to swagger about."

As they were going out to breakfast, Amy ran her arm through Uncle's, and whispered softly, —



“Which would you rather, Uncle, have your money back, or have your boy back?” and poor old Uncle answered her with eyes that brimmed with happy tears.

They had a great many jokes at the table. Amy and Auntie insisted on helping each other frequently to butter, exchanging smiles of delighted significance; and Harry pinned three napkins in front of him, to protect his new clothes. Several times during the meal Uncle and Auntie looked at each other with a common surprise, in the utter joy which they felt in this humble little house, where they were face to face with poverty and labor, and yet more contented than they had ever been before.

Directly after breakfast Amy had to be off to the village, in order to be in time to join the Sunday-school in the Christmas chorus which they had been practising to sing at the opening of the morning service. Harry got his hat to walk with her, and the old people were to follow a little later.

It was a cold, clear winter day, and the snow



was beaten into a splendid road-bed, over which sleighs full of merry people skimmed along. The sun was shining clearly, and Harry fortunately felt no need of the overcoat he didn't possess as he trudged quickly along by Amy's side, looking handsome, strong, and happy in his smart new clothes. His gift to Amy had been a charming little dark-blue coat, with a fur collar that rested lovingly against her shining hair. Amy was ardently fond of pretty clothes, and it cannot be denied that this Christmas was perceptibly happier with this coat than it could possibly have been without it. She and Auntie had turned and trimmed one of her old be-feathered hats, until it looked like new; and she had that sense of being well and appropriately dressed, without which it was never possible for Amy to feel quite herself.

She was certainly feeling her very happiest self, and looking her very prettiest self, as she reached the Sunday-school room, where she found Mr. Reed standing in the door and looking anxiously out. As he caught sight of her, he



came down the steps to meet her, telling her as he shook hands, that he had a favor to ask of her. Amy was much astonished; but when he explained that the girl who was to have sung the solo part in the morning's music was ill and could not come, and asked her if it was possible for her to take it, she said at once that she could, and would be glad to. He looked surprised, but much delighted, at her prompt compliance. He had never heard her sing, he said, but some one had told him that her voice sounded well in the chorus, and he was sure, from last night's performance, that she would be correct and true in it, if she undertook it. Amy, in fact, had learned the part accurately, from hearing it practised, and had sung it dozens of times to herself as she went about her work, little dreaming what that was the preparation for. The church was packed, and there was no time to lose. The organist, who was not yet quite reconciled to Amy's treatment of Mrs. Herbert, the night before, did not hesitate to tell Mr. Reed he was running a great risk



in giving the child the part, without trying to see if she could sing it.

“But there is not a moment in which to make the test,” the rector said; “it is this or nothing, and I don’t want to see the whole thing fail.”

“You need not be afraid, Mr. Reed,” said Amy simply; “I would not undertake it unless I knew I could do it.”

The child’s manner reassured him so completely that he gave the order at once for Amy to take the absent child’s position in the choir-stalls, and sing the solo part.

“Well, Baby, it just takes you to do it!” said Harry in laughing admiration. “If they knew you as I do, they wouldn’t be uneasy.”

He left her then, and went around to take his seat in the church, while Amy followed Mr. Reed, and took the place he pointed her to, at the end of the choir-stalls, in full view of the congregation. She was not at all excited, because she was perfectly sure of herself, and very free from the vanity and self-consciousness which would have probably unnerved her now. Her



position was very conspicuous; and as she knelt, as usual, to say her little silent prayer, almost every one in the church recognized the child who had made the most charming feature of the concert the night before.

Mr. Reed and his assistant came in and took their places. The organ rolled forth a great sounding note, and the chorus, sung by the whole Sunday-school, burst out with hearty notes of triumph. They sang their verse to the close, and then, after a few notes of interlude, one voice, that of Amy, rose high and clear, in a sweet, distinct soprano that uttered every word as plainly as if speaking. It was too essentially a child's voice to be very full, but it was deliciously clear and sweet and true, and Amy looked delicious as she sang it, standing with her hands clasped in front of her, and her head thrown slightly back, and chin raised, so that her eyes rested upon the bright colors of a stained glass window. She looked unconscious of any human presence.

As she ended, there was a feeling throughout



the congregation that would have spent itself in rapturous applause, had the place and circumstances authorized it. As it was, a profound silence followed her little solo; and as her sweet voice died away the children again took up the chorus with which the anthem ended.

At its close Amy opened her book and joined in the service that followed as calmly as usual, with no conception in her mind of the wave of enthusiasm that her singing and her beauty had sent through the congregation.

Uncle and Auntie and Harry knew it, though; and in each of their loving hearts there was such a feeling of almost adoring love for her, that they could hardly wait to get her in their arms again, to make sure that she was really their Amy, and belonged to them more than to any one in the world.

They found it harder still to realize, after church, when they saw Amy literally surrounded by admiring people, old and young, who waited at the little choir-door to speak to and congratulate the child. Mr. Reed, with evident pride,



introduced them; and Amy smiled and shook hands, and looked so bewitching and innocent and sweet that people lingered, as if unwilling to give up the sight of her. A dear old gentleman, whom Amy had often seen in church, wanted her to promise to come to his house that afternoon, to sing for his wife, who was an invalid. Amy agreed at once, but said it must be at an hour that would not interfere with something else she had to do. It was very important, it seemed, for her to be at home at four o'clock. Then the old gentleman proposed that she should jump into his sleigh, and drive home with him then, saying the distance was not far, and it would be such a delightful surprise for his wife. Amy looked uncertain; and, as she hesitated, her eye fell on Harry, who was waiting to take her home. She called him to her, and stated the case; and when Mr. Ward, the old gentleman, urged Harry to come with her, promising that they should be home by their dinner hour, she agreed with delight; and in a few minutes more they were whizzing along the smooth snow-



covered road, while Amy, tucked under luxurious fur robes, which her soul as well as her body found comfort in, talked busily to Mr. Ward, and Harry, sitting in front by the coachman, listened, and looked on with pride at the evident delight which the old man found in her talk. He questioned her about the important engagement at four o'clock; and then Amy told him about her little Sunday-school, composed of children so poor and so timid that they were too shy to go to the church Sunday-school, but loved to come and sing with her, and hear her Bible stories. She explained that the number had now grown to ten, and that they were all to come to a little Christmas-tree this afternoon, on which she had placed some little present for each, made by herself; and Uncle and Auntie and Harry were to give them a Christmas treat of good things.

Mr. Ward's house was not far off; and when he had ushered them into the finely furnished rooms, and led them to where his sweet old wife sat in her invalid's chair before the fire, the air of stately repose and elegance of the whole



establishment made poor little sybaritish Amy feel so at home, and so comfortable and happy, that it gave her a pang to think that she had neither part nor lot in such things now. When she had sung for Mrs. Ward, however, and the dear old lady had kissed and thanked her, and her husband had told her about the Sunday-school, and she had asked a great many questions about it, and promised to help the poor children, Amy had forgotten all about this feeling, and had no room in her soul for anything but joy. Mr. and Mrs. Ward were as cordial and nice to Harry as they were to her; and they would not let them go until they had promised to come back and see them often. Mr. Ward said he would come to see Uncle, and would try to get Auntie to come to see his wife; and so Amy felt that there was nothing needed to make her feel supremely happy.

If there had been any lack, it was filled to the brim by what she discovered when she went out to the sleigh; for there, in the care of the driver, was a great iced cake, and a whole basket of other



good things which Mrs. Ward had sent to be added to the children's treat. Mr. Ward came out with them, and explained about this, and then said he also had his contribution to make; and he counted into Amy's palm ten big, bright, round, silver dollars — one for each of the children.

This was too much for Amy. Her sweet eyes filled with tears of joy, and, dropping the money into her lap, she threw her arms around the old man's neck, and gave him a hearty hug. He had neither children nor grandchildren of his own, and this little act of childish love touched his heart so closely that tears came into his eyes too; and Amy left him blowing his nose and wiping his spectacles on the steps, as she and Harry were rapidly whirled away.

Perhaps that was the sweetest moment of all, when she found herself spinning along in the warm, comfortable sleigh, alone with her darling boy, whom she had been separated from for hours by these strange and exciting events that had been happening.

As she slipped her hand confidingly into



his, which closed upon it lovingly, she said gently,—

“Are you happy, Harry?”

“Are you?” he said.

“I am if you are.”

“And I am if you are.”

Then they both laughed, and said at once,—

“Then we both are!”

Harry, at times, had a certain feeling that this bright and beautiful creature was almost too fine and perfect for ordinary things and ordinary doings; and to-day, when he had seen her the soul and centre of so much that was apart from him, he felt a little sore about it, and needed the strong reassurance of her love for him. So he said now, almost wistfully,—

“What makes you happier than anything else? Could you tell?”

“Could I tell?” she answered half indignantly; “well, I should think I could! The thought that I belong to you!”

This was such complete and perfect comfort that he felt everything but happiness banished



from his heart; and when the jolly Christmas dinner had been eaten with dear old Uncle and Auntie, and the Sunday-school children had been feasted royally and given their splendid presents, and he and Amy were reflecting on the events and feelings of this day, each delighted the other by pronouncing it the happiest of their lives.



## XVII.

A YEAR had passed in the new home, and springtime was come again. The seeds sown on their arrival at the barren little spot had borne good fruit; and now, as the leaves came out on trees and vines and bushes, and the garden-beds began to show luxuriant foliage, the place, although it was humble and unpretentious, was very charming. Harry had had an increase of salary, and he had put up a picturesque porch, and put on some paint judiciously. There was altogether an air of care and taste and good management about it that made it very attractive to see.

Amy was now in her thirteenth year, and more bewitching than ever, with her little airs of stateliness, which sat well upon a maiden who was growing up so slim and tall. She



paid no attention at all to the fashions, and continued to dress herself in her own simple style, with her plain, long, little gowns, with their short waists and puffed sleeves. She had blue flannel ones for winter, and white cotton ones for summer, and that was enough. Once or twice Harry had taken her to the city, on some little lark that thrilled them both with happiness; and he could see that her appearance caused comment. He listened carefully, to hear what might be said about her; but the most severe remark he caught was that of a lady who, glancing first at her costume and then at her face, said earnestly, —

“What a queer-looking child! — and how utterly fascinating!”

Amy herself was joyfully unconscious of being noticed at all, as she considered Harry to be so supremely handsome and charming, that any looks directed toward the pair, she at once set down as admiration for him. He was indeed as bonny a lad as ever a little maid took pride in. Amy was getting into the romantic age,



and she identified every prince in the fairy-tale that she read, and every brave and splendid boy and man, with Harry as he had been, was, or was to be. If she ever heard him utter a word, or saw him do an act, which fell short of her ideal of him, her severest reproof was: "That is not like my boy;" and it proved an always effectual means of bringing him to his senses. It was rather a rough world that Harry lived in, among porters and draymen and sea-faring men; and it was a help beyond words to him, to carry about in his consciousness that sweet image of childish innocence and purity, whose belief in his goodness was of the absolute and unquestioning character of her belief in the goodness of God. Harry could imagine no worse punishment in this world, than to have the eyes of Amy turned upon him with disappointment and scorn; and he struggled hard against any influences about him which might tend to make this possible. The result was a rectitude of conduct, far removed from priggishness, — for his superabundant vitality and love of fun and



good-fellowship saved him from that, — but so resolute and unswerving, that his example was unconsciously a help and an incentive to those about him.

Occasionally he would bring one of his friends home with him for a day or a night, and then it was funny to see the stateliness of Amy in doing honor to Harry's guests. She never failed, for all her dignity, to make friends with these; for she had Harry's own love of good-comradeship, and she entered into their jokes and amusements to a degree uncommon in a girl. Harry was now twenty-one, and a man in size and stature; but he had a great deal of the boy in him that he would never lose, and was, in some ways, younger than his years, just as Amy was, in so much, beyond hers.

During Harry's summer vacation he always found a great deal to occupy himself with about the place; and, when it was possible, Amy would always bring her work and carry it on near him, so that, from time to time, they could talk a little, and not miss the pleasure of a companionship



which was so dear to each that they never got enough of it.

On one lovely afternoon of early summer-time, Harry, in his shirt-sleeves, was busily employed in putting up a lattice-work at the little side porch, where Amy, in her long, checked gingham apron, was churning. One of Harry's recent purchases had been a fine cow, of which the entire household was duly proud; and it was Amy's delight to make the butter. The lattice-work screen, over which vines were to be trained in the future, was but half completed; and so Amy sat in full view, working her dasher vigorously, while Harry hammered away, when suddenly a carriage stopped outside the little gateway and a lady and gentleman got out. There had been so much noise that the sound of the wheels had been lost; and Harry and Amy knew nothing, until they saw the two strangers standing on the ground, talking to the man who had driven them. Then the hammer stopped in mid-air, in the boy's hand, and Amy too became quite still, with her hand on the dasher. They could hear the brief sentences



addressed by the strangers to their driver; and something in their enunciation and tones sounded familiar to them both. Harry recognized in them a certain similarity to the inflections and pronunciations of Amy's voice; and Amy herself seemed possessed with strange hauntings of the far distant past, as she listened.

They were fashionably dressed people, and the lady, who was in a smart travelling costume, put up an eye-glass with a long tortoise-shell handle, and stared scrutinizingly at the child at the churn, as she preceded her husband up the walk.

When they had mounted the steps of the front porch, and were therefore lost to sight, Harry and Amy looked at each other, the same agitated fear in the eyes of each.

At that moment a sharp knock upon the front door was heard. At the sound, Miss Melissa, who was making currant jelly in the kitchen, moved forward to answer it, while Harry and Amy still stood spell-bound. They could hear Miss Melissa inviting the strangers



into the little parlor, and after that the low murmur of voices.

“O Baby!” said Harry, with a sort of sob in his voice, “suppose they have come to take you away!”

With a little rush, she was in his arms, her hands tight around his neck.

“I’d like to see them try it!” she said indignantly. “Harry, do you think I’d leave you for any one in the world?” and she drew back to look into his eyes.

“Promise me, darling,” he said, in that shaken voice; his face was white to the very lips. “Only promise me that, and I’ll be satisfied.”

“I promise,” she said solemnly, and kissed him on the forehead before she drew herself out of his arms.

Miss Melissa now appeared, flushed and agitated too.

“O Amy,” she said, “something has happened. Somebody wants to see you — a gentleman and lady. They are English people, darling, and I’m so afraid they may be” —



She broke off helplessly.

"I know, Auntie; I have seen them," said the child, feeling herself suddenly strong and self-reliant; "you needn't be afraid. I would not leave Harry and Uncle and you for all the people in the world. Let me go and see them."

"But you must dress yourself, my dear. They are very grand people, and it's bad enough that they caught me like this."

"No," said the child proudly, holding high her little head, atop of which her golden curls were pinned up in a bunch, for the sake of coolness; "why should I dress for them? I want them to see me exactly as I am. Come with me, Auntie and Harry; I'm sorry Uncle is not here," and leading the way with her own stately grace, she walked down the hall and entered the little parlor, which somehow seemed to shrink as she saw these imposing people in it.

Just within the threshold she stood still, and bowed ceremoniously.

"Good-afternoon," she said with quiet composure, and then stood as if waiting.



The lady lifted her glass, and regarded her with a keen interest. She smiled, as if unconsciously, as she returned the greeting. The eyes of both the strangers were riveted on the child. They took no notice whatever of Miss Melissa and Harry. The boy had drawn on a faded old coat, and, with his rough shoes, shabby working trousers, and tousled hair, looked, in spite of his beauty, like any ordinary young workman. He followed Miss Melissa's lead and sat down. The child alone remained standing.

"We should like," began the lady in a deep and pleasant voice, though there was a tone of haughtiness in it, "if you do not object — we should like to see you alone."

"Why?" said the child distinctly, and stood waiting deliberately for a reply.

"Because," said the lady, a little disconcerted by this direct demand for reasons, "because my husband and I have something to say to you in private."

"You can say it now," replied the child; "I



don't have any secrets from this lady and this young man. I should tell them whatever it is you have to tell me."

"Oh, very well," said the gentleman, glancing at his wife; "let them stay, by all means. What we want to know is your name."

"Why?" said the child again.

The man laughed as if involuntarily; but Amy retained her perfect gravity, standing very erect, and looking amusingly stately in her long checked apron, with her top-knot of bright curls.

"Because," said the lady, taking up the word, "we think it possible that we may have something to tell you that it will be very much to your advantage to know."

"In what way?" asked the child.

"I will tell you when you have given me your name — unless you prefer not to do that."

"My name is Amy Erskine Leigh," said the child distinctly.

"So we had heard," said the lady; "and we have come all the way from England in search of a little girl of that name."



“Well?” said the child, without showing the surprise that had been expected.

“If you can prove your right to that name, you are my little niece; and, as I have no children of my own, perhaps I might adopt you and take you back to England to live with me, and be brought up as my child.”

Poor Auntie at these words took out her handkerchief, and began to wipe away the tears that overflowed her eyes. Harry, who sat on a hard wooden chair just within the door, was white and rigid as a statue, with his gaze fixed on Amy's face.

“Are you my father's sister?” said the child.

“If you are the child of George Erskine Leigh, I am,” replied the lady.

“Are you older than he was?” asked the child, looking at her with a severe scrutiny.

“Yes; a year or two.”

“I never heard him speak of you,” she said, still with that searching gaze.

The lady flushed.

“Perhaps you have forgotten,” she said; “but



the fact is, your father displeased his family, and wilfully cut himself loose from them. Still, I am willing to forget all that, and if you can prove yourself really his child, I will take you and adopt you as my own."

Amy turned to Miss Melissa.

"Will you show this lady the things you have kept," she said quietly.

There was complete silence in the room, while Miss Melissa got up and went to an old-fashioned secretary, and taking out with trembling hands the little garments that Amy had worn when she first came to them, offered them for inspection. The lady and gentleman took them eagerly, and examined the marks on them, one after the other. Everything they touched gave stronger and stronger proof, and the little pin, with its crest and initials, made the thing a certainty.

"You are my own little niece," said the lady, with sudden enthusiasm. "How wonderful it all is! I will tell you all about the strange way in which the paper, five years old, fell into our hands, and caused us to set off at once in search of the



little girl who had been rescued from the lost vessel." At these words a sound something like a sob broke from Harry. "Your uncle has been as anxious as I to find you," the lady went on, "and we will make you so happy in our home,—a beautiful, splendid place, with a magnificent park and a superb old house, which will all some day be yours, for we have no child of our own to leave it to. And we'll give you everything on earth you want, a pony-cart to drive about in, with your own little groom, and all the beautiful clothes and books and pictures you could wish for—indeed, everything to make a child's heart happy."

She spoke with great eagerness, as if she were in a hurry to impress the child with the magnificence of the lot that had suddenly fallen to her. She would have liked to take her in her arms and caress her, but, strange to say, there was something in the small creature's attitude and manner which held her off.

"We are going to call you by our name, so you will be Amy Erskine Leigh Waring," the lady went on; "and your uncle and I will make



you as happy as a little princess. We made up our minds that, if we found you, we would do the utmost in our power for you. Your grandfather disinherited your father, and that made me a great deal richer, and I shall leave all I have to you."

Amy, though attentive to her conversation with the stranger, had yet been distinctly conscious of all that had taken place around her. She had heard the gate-latch open, and seen Miss Melissa slip silently out of the room, and go to meet her brother. There had been a hurried colloquy in the hall, and then the two old people had come into the room together, and dropped into their seats. She had seen the half-frightened gesture with which the poor old man, in his shabby working-clothes, had taken off his bent straw hat, and made a confused bow to the strangers, which had been negligently returned. Then she had seen both the old man and the old woman turn their helpless gazes upon Harry, who, white and immovable, never took his eyes from Amy's face. But she appeared to ignore all, and the



three spectators, as they sat in silence, began to wonder with a sort of terror what she would do.

“We shall have a great deal to talk about, my dear,” said the lady ingratiatingly, “and I should be glad if you could make your arrangements to go back with us to New York this evening. I am anxious to hear all about the strange story of your rescue, and of course we shall wish to pay liberally these good people who have taken care of you all this time.”

She glanced slightly at the trio seated near the door as she spoke.

“If you wish to hear the story of my rescue,” said the child, “I will tell it to you now. I can remember it very distinctly. I remember even farther back than that, when my papa and mamma were often sad and solitary, and in need of money. She was very delicate, my darling mamma, and her beautiful face was often white and pale. My papa used to wish he could take her away from the hot city, and be very sad that he had not the money to do it; and he left his country at last, and started to a new, strange world, because he



could not make a living for his wife and child in the way his wife needed to live, with her delicate health. I remember all that; and I remember, too, how they loved each other, and how I used to hear them say that love was worth everything else in the world. I don't remember, though, any letters that ever came to my papa that brought him either love or help, and I never heard him speak of the sympathy of any dear sister in his troubles. I remember they both had tears in their eyes when the ship was leaving England, and that my papa said over and over, that it broke his heart to come, but it was a matter of life and death. I have often thought how strange it was that he should have said those words; for it was death to them both so soon after. And so it would have been for me, too, but for a boy who had never heard of me, but saw, one night after a storm, a little child adrift at sea, lashed to a mattress, and jumped into a boat, and risked his life on that dangerous water, with the high waves tossing his little boat about like a chip, and saved that little child, and took care of her, and worked



day and night to make money for her, that she might have everything in the world that any child could need, and brought her to a kind old man and woman, who have loved her like their own flesh and blood ever since, and have given her all these years nothing but love and kindness and care and tenderness and devotion. I owe my life to that boy, and I will never leave him; and I owe to him and to this old man and woman debts that money can never pay. I would not leave this house, and live a life apart from them, to be a real princess, and to have the prospect of sitting on a throne. You don't seem to have noticed these friends of mine," she ended, turning toward the three astonished figures near the door. "This is my guardian and best friend, who saved my life, and shall say what shall be done with it for the present and the future; and these are the dear old people who have taken care of me all these years. Perhaps you have not spoken to them because you were waiting to be introduced. Let me introduce my uncle and aunt to you, Mr. and Mrs. Waring," and, stepping backward, she gave a hand



to each of the old people, and gently drew them to their feet, while on Harry she turned the radiance of her lovely face, with a smile of happy confidence and reassurance.

The old people bowed confusedly, in acknowledgment of this formal introduction; and Mr. and Mrs. Waring, perhaps to their own surprise, found themselves advancing to shake hands. They were both evidently startled out of their usual self-possession; and after shaking the hands of the old people, they turned to Harry. Laying aside the stiff, conventional manner which had distinguished them before, they both spoke to the boy heartily, and with some enthusiasm, about his rescue of the child. His response to their cordiality was, at first, extremely stiff and cold; but Amy got behind him and managed to whisper,—

“O Harry, that isn't like my boy!” and in a moment he changed. Then Uncle and Auntie, too, finding that there was no danger of their treasure being taken from them, felt a great softening of the heart toward these poor people



who were forced to give up such a joy from their lives, and they spoke to them with a winning courtesy that soon had the effect of putting every one at ease.

It was Amy's idea to invite them to a little luncheon before they went back to the station to take the train for New York; and when she found out that they both liked buttermilk, she took them out on the porch, where her butter had been just about to "come" when she was interrupted, and let them see her next process of collecting it. Then she remembered the wish that had been expressed by her new relatives to see her alone, and, leaving Miss Melissa to lay the table, she went back with them to the parlor, where the three had a long talk. The most earnest arguments were employed, and most fascinating inducements were held out; but it very soon became certain that the child's resolve to remain with her humble friends was fixed and immovable. Seeing this, her new-found relatives gave up their case, only begging that Amy would promise to come to England to visit them.





SHE FOUND OUT THAT THEY BOTH LIKED BUTTERMILK.







They first proposed to take her back with them now; but this she decidedly refused, and the utmost they could secure for the present was a promise to come to New York, under Harry's care, and stay with them a few days before their return to England. She was won over to make all possible concessions by the confession of her aunt that she had bitterly repented her hardness to her young brother, and had never recovered from the blow his death had given her. Her father, too, she told the child, had realized his severity when it was too late, and had grieved for his son deeply, not surviving him long.

"He would have made a rich provision for you in his will, my child, if he had dreamed of your being alive," she said. "That is one reason I feel myself all the more bound to provide for you, and to see that you want for nothing."

"I shall never want while Harry lives," said Amy confidently, "and he is young and strong. But they, the dear old man and woman, are getting feeble now, and I have not a great while left to work for them, and to try to do



for their helplessness what they did for me in mine."

"And when they die, my child, you will have to come to us," her aunt said entreatingly; "you will promise that, at least."

"I shall do what Harry tells me," said the child; "he will know what will be right."

As she spoke, her dear boy entered, saying that Miss Melissa wanted her. He had dressed carefully, and how proud she was to see him look such a man and such a gentleman at once! She had never thought his dear face so handsome before, or his dear figure so straight and strong. She could see a look of admiration on the faces of her relatives as she left the room confident that when they talked to Harry they would find, in the intelligence and character he revealed, a worthy complement to his brave and bonny looks.

Miss Melissa, too, had dressed herself neatly in her quaint, old-fashioned black, with a snowy cap above her white hair; and Uncle looked such an old darling in the toilet he had made in honor of his guests, that Amy gave him a hug of pride,



and vowed she must go and make a toilet too. It was what Auntie had summoned her for, and it took her only a very few moments to fly away to her room and dash the fresh, cool water over her face, which gave it a sweet, bright color, and then comb out the glory of her golden locks, and slip on one of her quaint little white gowns. When she came down so metamorphosed, and entered the parlor, the elders exchanged glances of delighted admiration, as they looked up from their interested talk with Harry; and this was only deepened and sweetened when she came and offered them each a kiss, saying simply, —

“Come out to the dining-room please, Uncle Jack and Aunt Flora.”

She had caught the names they called each other by, and of her own accord made use of them. They were both evidently touched by it.

When the party was gathered around the little table, with its snowy cloth and beautiful decoration of fruits and flowers from the garden near by, Amy, according to her invariable custom, bent her head and said her little form of thanksgiving.

X



When she looked up the eyes of her aunt, turned on her, were thick with tears.

“Your father taught you that, I know,” she said. “How wonderful it seems! They are the very words I used to say as a child at my father’s table. I was back there again, with George beside me, as you said them.”

This little act seemed to set the final seal of love and confidence between the new-comers and the little child.

It was very delightful to Amy to sit by and watch the development of the acquaintance between the uncle and aunt who were hers by the tie of blood, and the uncle and aunt whom she acknowledged by what she felt to be a stronger bond,—the likeness and congeniality and sameness of interest and environment. She and Harry took but little part in the conversation; but they sat next each other, and occasionally exchanged a furtive hand-squeeze under the table, and were exceedingly happy.

The child’s quick intuition detected a concealed surprise on the part of the two guests as



they made the discovery that their host and hostess were people of education and refinement, and not the rough laboring-folk that they had at first taken them to be.

Mrs. Waring expressed this surprise to Amy as the child was left alone with her aunt and uncle in the garden after the meal, and made many apologies for the manner in which she had treated them at first. Amy explained to her then the old man's sudden loss of fortune, and told the story of the five thousand dollars with which Harry had come to the rescue, omitting, however, all mention of the estrangement that had once existed between the two, as that seemed a fact now too unreal ever to be spoken or thought of. She was very glad that her relatives by blood should have been made to recognize the intelligence and refinement, as well as the worth, of her relatives by spirit and by adoption. Amy made a very decided inward comment upon her aunt's apology. It seemed strange, to her way of thinking, that she should have felt that she owed more courtesy and consideration to the rescuer and the



befrienders of her niece when she saw them well dressed, and discovered that they were people of education and good-breeding, than when she believed them common working-people who had done precisely the same thing. She knew her old Uncle and Auntie would never have made this distinction; and while the intimacy and friendliness between the child and her new-found relatives increased every minute, there was a feeling that she was more of a kind with Uncle and Auntie and Harry than with these blood-relations.

When the time came for them to go to the station, Amy put on her great white Gainsborough hat, which had been one of Harry's rather extravagant presents to her, and, accompanied by the boy, went with them to the train. The Englishman and his wife looked back with longing eyes as the train moved off, and they realized that that exquisite little creature who sat in the dusty old carriage with the air of a little duchess could never be theirs by any claim which they could make. Even if they could have wrenched her



away by force, they knew too well where her loyal heart was fixed.

As for Harry, as they drove homeward in unwonted style, sitting alone in the big and blundering old carriage, the boy looked grave. In spite of the satisfaction in his heart at the decision which the child had compelled her uncle and aunt to concur in, he felt a little afraid that he ought not to have allowed the sacrifice.

"You have given up a great deal to stay with us," he said; "I hope you may never regret it."

"Are you afraid I will?" asked the child, fixing on him one of her old-time gazes of severe challenge and arraignment. "If you are, you have a very low opinion of me."

"But you are a child now, darling, and when you grow up, you may see very differently the advantages they have to offer you."

"Do you suppose I'm going to get *meaner* and *lower* and *smaller*," hurling the words at him, in her old emphatic way, "as I get *older*? I know better. I know that the longer I live the more I



will feel that it was the true and really valuable riches that I held on to."

The boy looked at her with an ardent pride.

"Amy," he said tenderly, "have you ever thought of what would become of you if Uncle and Auntie should die?"

"Of course I have," replied the child promptly; "I've thought about it often, and, sad as it would seem, I would always feel that if Harry was left I would still be loved and taken care of."

"But — for we must face the whole thing bravely — what would become of you if I died too?"

"O Harry!" she cried, half sobbingly, throwing her arms around his neck, as they drove homeward in the gloom of twilight, "I can never bring myself to think of that. It seems to me I could never bear this world without you."

"Please God, you never shall," the boy answered solemnly, folding her close in his arms. "I promise you, Amy, that as long as life lasts I will never leave your side, provided you want to keep me there."



“And I promise you, Harry,” she answered, drawing back and looking into his eyes with the strong faith of a woman in her gaze, “that no one else shall ever be loved by me as I love you — as I’ve loved you, above all the world, since the night you saved my life. As long as you are left to me I’m rich enough. I don’t ask any more.”

They drove home, after that, in total silence, hand in hand, thinking very tender and loving thoughts, under the quiet stars, that came out, one by one. The love that she so pledged to him was deep and strong and true, beyond the knowledge of ordinary childhood; but Amy’s grave experience of life had developed her very early, and she knew in her heart that she was capable of keeping her pledge inviolate till death. And Harry, who was already a man in stature, though in many ways he continued a child in heart, felt also the solemnity of the promises they had given to each other; and, looking along the vista of the future, he saw the love that had blessed and purified his boyhood shedding its glory on his manhood’s years.

They reached home happy and contented.

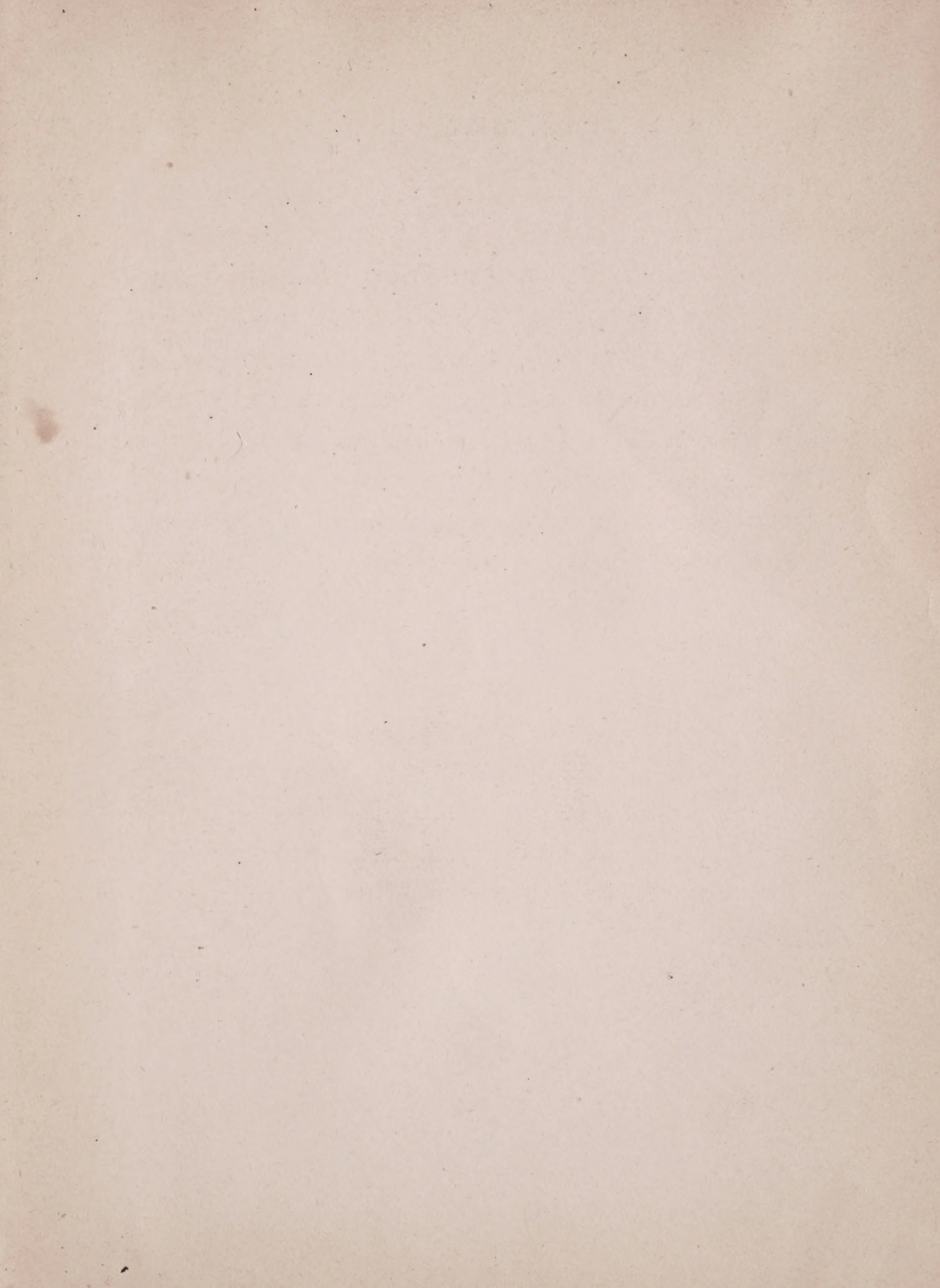


The old folks were on the porch to meet them ; and as they clasped the child to their hearts they felt her to be theirs now by a stronger bond than ever.

She stood in the centre of the little group, looking lovingly from one face to another. She was the smallest and the youngest of them, but it was in her that all their hearts were centred — the child Amy, the very meaning of whose little name is Love.

















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